

FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN EARLY
NEWFOUNDLAND RADIO BROADCASTING:
AN ANALYSIS OF OCCUPATIONAL NARRATIVE,
ORAL HISTORY AND SONG REPERTOIRE

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PHILIP DOUGLAS HISCOCK



Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland
Radio Broadcasting: An Analysis of Occupational
Narrative, Oral History and Song Repertoire

by

© Philip Douglas Hiscock, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore
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ABSTRACT

This thesis illustrates the interaction of folk culture and popular culture in Newfoundland in the mid-twentieth century, mainly the 1930s and 1940s, through three case studies. One of these studies examines the occupational narratives of a man whose adult life was spent as an announcer on local and regional radio. These folklife narratives are interpreted in terms of the impression management of a local celebrity.

The second study focusses on a category of radio programme, the message programme, which played an important role in the conveyance of information in and among Newfoundland outport communities from the 1930s to the 1960s. In particular, the *Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin* is examined in detail. This programme was influenced not only by the sensibilities of its creators and "gatekeepers," but also by its listeners. This led to its being a flexible form of folk communication.

The third study scrutinizes the radio serial, *Irene B. Mellon*, which was popular in and around St. John's from 1934 to 1941. This serial combined adventure fiction and regional music with much traditional context. In particular an annotative study of the programme's song repertoire is presented.

Together these studies display the array of materials available to the student of Newfoundland folklore and the mass media. Oral history, folklore, radio programming, archival materials and published sources are drawn together to provide the resource base for the thesis.

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Earlier versions of two chapters were written as term papers in graduate courses on urban folklore and folksong taught respectively by Peter Narváez and Neil Rosenberg; I wish I could recognise all the ideas that came from them and that were incorporated in the thesis. Many students, friends, and professors provided me with references to materials they knew I would be interested in, photocopies of articles or other sources, and even aid in the form of asking a few questions of informants they wouldn't otherwise have asked. Some of these are Brenda Barry, David Buchan, John Cousins, Elke Dettmer, Laurel Doucette, Patti Fulton, Susan Hart, Morgy Halley, Roger Howse, Audrey Schultz Kinsella, Clara Murphy, Janet McNaughton, Peter Neary, Gordon Quinton, Barbara Rietl, Jeff Webb, and Otto Willwood.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis examines cultural materials which lie at the interface of folk culture and popular culture. In particular it examines aspects of radio during the first two decades of that medium in Newfoundland--the 1930s and 1940s. Since many traits of broadcasting during those decades continued into later times the thesis is not completely restricted to those twenty years.

My own interest in radio goes back thirty years to my preschool years when, home alone with my mother, I would hear her singing along with the songs we heard on the radio during the day. In fact one of my very earliest memories is of thinking that the records being played on the radio were actually real singers, "stepping up to the mike," as the announcers would say.

Although television was introduced in St. John's in 1955, when I was only three, my family had no dependable set until I was a teenager. As a result I was something of a cultural anachronism among my friends. At night while they did their homework to the glow of the television, I did mine to the sound of radio. I was fascinated by radio from an early age and this fascination carried over into adult life. I was attracted to the idea of thousands, even millions, of people sharing simultaneously their audience of new ideas, sharing their experience of sensations and emotions. Unlike viewers of television, however, who also shared

their experiences with others, radio listeners seemed active, still involved in and attached to their own private worlds. Radio seemed to be a more dignified mass medium to my mind than television because it allowed this retention of self. I found out later that Marshall McLuhan put this another way, contrasting the two media as "hot" (radio) and "cool" (television).¹

As an adult I listened to international-shortwave radio, fascinated by such long-distance sharing of a rich variety of cultural material. The local broadcasts of many countries were more riveting than the official broadcasts of foreign governments, though. Without leaving my home I could partake of the daily lives of rural and small-town peoples in many countries and share with them their auditory experiences. Listening to their notices of funerals, births, weddings and other other less personal but no less local events, I was reminded of the kind of radio of my own childhood. At the same time I was brought into those peoples' lives. Radio's power was still great.

Folklore, like other forms of culture, is a species of shared knowledge, often implicit, tacit or even unconscious. Experiences can only be shared when a cultural link, however ephemeral or tenuous, has been established. When I began to study folklore, I became interested in the structure of these links, in how people come to distinguish some cultural forms as their own. Newfoundland in the late twentieth century is an interesting case because of the widespread sense of having

¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 299.

begun the process of a transfer of cultural affiliation from local forms to international forms.² Many have responded to this sense by reviving feelings of being a nation, of being a people with a life separate from those around it. Having an interest in radio and seeing contemporary mass media being used in the formation and metamorphosis of nationalist sentiments,² I wondered what form Newfoundlanders' self-conscious culture took fifty years ago when radio was new. I began the project which led to this thesis because I wanted to know what radio listeners were listening to in the 1930s and '40s.

Other than some recordings I had made with my father, the very first tape-recorded interview I made was with Aubrey "Mac" MacDonald.³ Some of the anxiety I experienced conducting that interview stemmed from my lack of familiarity with the technology, not to mention the protocol of interviewing another person; some of my anxiety also stemmed from my ignorance. I had read what published history of Newfoundland broadcasting there was, but what Aubrey Mac was telling me was new. Later I came to appreciate the differences between the folk history of radio in Newfoundland which found its form in the narratives and other expressions of the men and women who experienced it, and

²On the use of Newfoundland media in revived or "neo-nationalism," see James Overton, "Towards a Critical Analysis of Neo-Nationalism in Newfoundland," in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), pp. 229 - 30 and 239 - 240.

³MUNFLA tape C6248/83-236. All of the interviews and other recordings collected for this thesis have been deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). See Appendix B, below, for a complete listing of accession numbers and shelflist numbers.

the documented institutional history of radio in Newfoundland, which found its form in the few sketchy articles I had read. As my knowledge of the first grew, my confidence that the second was more or less complete diminished.

Several months after I first interviewed Aubrey Mac, and after I had interviewed several others on related topics, I recorded another interview with him. I was astonished to hear many of the same narratives, some being almost verbatim repetitions of earlier performances. This led me to think about the narratives as narrative, and about how they were used and why. In this thesis I look at this problem.

The more I talked to people who had been involved in radio during the era which interested me, the more I wanted to fashion an oral history of broadcasting in Newfoundland. As an enthusiast of the topic but not as a folklorist, I was less interested in the folk history of broadcasting. I had assumed and emphasized discrepancies between the folk history in its myriad forms, and the "real truth." As the "real truth" emerged, however, the folk historical variations took on more meaning - sometimes personal meaning to the teller, sometimes broader cultural meaning, sometimes meanings of historical context. In particular, as I studied the various aspects of the radio series, *Irene B. Mellon*, I became predominantly interested in the folk history of that show. I believe now that no social and cultural history can be complete without an accounting of men's and women's experiences and memories. Such is folk history.

More so than today, four or five decades ago the new medium of radio tended to look outside itself to indigenous forms of culture to inform and shape itself. It was a flexible medium, drawing on the popular culture of the day, as well as on a vital folk culture. Live performances by local musicians were common. Programme sponsors took an active role in programme creation and development. Announcers spoke in styles previously used by public speakers from stage and podium. Audiences found outlets for their own cross-communication which made radio a true medium of folk-expression.

The three major chapters of this work illustrate three different approaches to the study of the articulation of folk and popular cultures in general and of folklore in broadcasting in particular. Chapter Two is an examination of some of the narratives of a semi-retired radio announcer, Aubrey MacDonald (1911 - 1984), who learned his trade in the 1930s. His stories are looked at not only as occupational lore but also as a species of impression management, the Erving Goffman term which refers to the way in which we manipulate other people's views of ourselves by our own behaviours.⁴ A single chapter of a thesis cannot express the breadth and depth of a man's personality. This is particularly true of Aubrey Mac, a man loved by many of his own generation, yet reviled by many of younger generations who saw in his style a hokey, haughty, and self-conscious manner. The chapter is not a biography, nor does it explore the

⁴*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Doubleday, 1959), p. 253.

differing readings of his style by different audiences. Rather it is an analytical discussion and classification of the man's narratives as collected in two interviews and miscellaneous other published and broadcast sources. In addition the developing tools of students of occupational lore are used to examine the personal expressions of a worker in Newfoundland broadcasting. Broadcasters, particularly announcers like Aubrey Mac, talk for a living. An analysis of their narratives reveals how native talent, personal narrative and professional skill all work together to produce manifestations of personality.

From time to time one finds folk culture informing popular media; for example, a folksong may be sung on a television programme. Rarely in the modern media, however, does one find folk culture going beyond mere popular information and actually shaping a popular medium. Chapter Three concerns such a case. In an analysis of Newfoundland message programmes I conclude that they were a form of folk radio. It is suggested that within the modern medium of radio, there are cultural media in the form of programmes or time blocks which structurally serve the needs of different segments of the population. In some instances a programme is so flexible and responsive to the needs of the audience that it becomes a medium of folk expression. The *Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin* was one such programme from the 1930s until the early 1960s, as were the *Dosco News* in the mid-1960s and a few other shows.

This chapter approaches broadcasting from an angle different from that of Chapter Two, that of the audiences. Message programmes are analysed from

an oral historical perspective. These programmes have informed the folk culture of Newfoundland in at least two ways: the repeating of legendary, unique or humorous messages, much in the manner that jokes are told and retold; and the inclusion of the programmes in the folk histories of Newfoundland. I use the term "folk history" here as Richard Dorson has to mean the intellectual conceptualisation of the history of a group by members of that group.⁵ This is in contrast to the term "oral history" which is essentially one of the tools of any historical research, including that carried out by folklorists. A folk history is more often than not oral, although it may indeed come from published sources. An oral history is not necessarily a folk history: "elite" history may also be elicited by oral techniques.

The message programmes are part of the folk history, not only of broadcasters and broadcasting, but also of community life throughout Newfoundland. Memories of the Doyle programme in particular are continually brought forward in reminiscences of outport life. Documents of oral history and archival research illustrate the various aspects and roles of message programmes in Newfoundland outport culture. Materials used include humorous legends in archival reports, oral history interviews with people directly involved in the preparation and distribution of the programmes, published reports, and archival recordings of the few programmes which have survived.

⁵ Richard Dorson, "The Oral Historian and the Folklorist," in David Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), pp. 291 - 299.

The *Irene B. Mellon* was a unique series in the history of the Newfoundland electronic media. Chapter Four is an analysis of this series. The adventure and music serial had a large audience within the comparatively small coverage area of the stations on which it was carried. It was on the air from 1934 to 1941. At a time in Newfoundland's political history when its independence had been revoked, the *Irene B. Mellon* served as a weekly affirmation of native culture. The show enabled Newfoundlanders to remain proud of their country and its people. Newfoundlanders' language, music, hardiness, handiness and ideological independence were all celebrated by the programme in the context of the modern, changing and dangerous world of that era. Part of the examination of this programme is the survey of song titles found in the scripts which constitutes Chapter Five. A breakdown of sources indicates that the majority of songs came from American popular culture sources, but that a large proportion of the remaining songs were from local folk and popular sources. The documentation for this chapter consists of oral history interviews of persons who were involved in the programme, and the scripts of the programmes which were fortuitously preserved.

Each of the three case studies of this work is based on a variety of documentation. Students of folklore and popular culture in a modern context must use as broad a range of source materials as possible in order to gain an accurate understanding of the true roles of such cultural forms in contemporary affairs. Moreover, popular culture spawns its own popular critical literature and

these "meta-popcultural" forms must be taken into account.⁶ In its use of a rich array of folkloric and popular culture resources, I hope that this study goes a little way to revealing fertile areas for further research.

There is a huge popular literature on broadcasting, broadcasters and their history in Newfoundland. Some of this literature is reflected in the bibliography of this thesis. Until recently there has been little academic study of the broadcast media in Newfoundland, although the media have played an important role in the development of Newfoundland folk culture for over fifty years. Two exceptions to this academic dearth are by Peter Narváez. One is an article about J. R. Smallwood as both broadcaster and folklorist in his role as "The Barrelman," on a radio programme of that name which he hosted in the 1930s and '40s.⁷ He shows the extent to which Smallwood acted as a collector of Newfoundland's folk culture, and thence as disseminator. Implicit in this is the feedback which occurred by this process: the programme was fed by the folklore of Newfoundland, but the folklore was also fed by the programme. Narváez's other article deals with "media lore" in Newfoundland and the extent to which this topic of folkloric expression has embedded itself in the culture of the

⁶I have coined the term "meta-popcultural" on the model of Alan Dundes term "metafolklore" and to serve the same purpose, which is to sum up and refer to the self-conscious expressions of meaning of a group's or a person's own cultural forms. Alan Dundes, "Meta-folklore and Oral Literary Criticism," *The Monist* 50: 4 (1966); rpt. in Jan Harold Brunvand, ed., *Readings in American Folklore* (New York: Norton, 1979), 404 - 415.

⁷Peter Narváez: "J. R. Smallwood, The 'Barrelman': The Broadcaster as Folklorist," *Canadian Folklore Canadian*, 5: 1-2 (1983), 60 - 78.

province.⁸

My own study of the mass media in reported folklore in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) shows the influence which the mass media have had on the content of folklore and sometimes on the structure of folklore.⁹ A paper by Gerald Thomas suggests that one of the most thorough-going influences of the mass media has been a structural change in the folklore of the Port-au-Port Peninsula French speakers. Since the arrival of television, and the ensuing popularity of soap-operas, the telling of traditional folktales has declined. Folktales have no drama, informants say, and they are boring, having all those three-way repetitions.¹⁰

A final work touches on the occupational lore of broadcasters. This is the dissertation of Martin Laba, dealing with conversational structure and only incidentally with the content of the narratives told him by his informants, many of whom were off-duty broadcasters.¹¹

⁸Peter Narváez, "The Folklore of 'Old Foolishness': Newfoundland Media Legends," *Canadian Literature*, 108 (1986), 125 - 143.

⁹Philip Hiscock, "The Mass Media in the Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Survey of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA)," *Culture and Tradition*, 8 (1984), 20 - 38.

¹⁰Gerald Thomas, "Other Worlds: Folktale and Soap Opera in Newfoundland's French Tradition," in K. S. Goldstein and N. V. Rosenberg, eds., *Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift*, Folklore and Language Bibliographical and Special Series, No. 7 (St. John's: M. U. N., 1980), pp. 343 - 352.

¹¹Martin Laba, "Narrative and Talk: A Study in Folkloric Communication of Everyday Conversation", unpublished PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983.

Paul Mercer investigated the relationship of the Newfoundland folk culture with one aspect of the country's popular culture, print.¹² The present thesis is an examination of the folk culture's relationship with another aspect of popular culture, radio. The people whom Mercer wrote about, such as songwriter John Burke, were using a major popular medium of their day in combination with folk traditions to achieve a space for themselves in the cultural milieu of their community. One can note a similar personality, even similar means of publication, among Burke; Jack Withers, the driving force behind the *Irene B. Mellon* radio show; Aubrey MacDonald; and, in the 1950s, Omar Blondahl, a folk revival entertainer who through his popularity on radio compiled and published Newfoundland folksongs.¹³ All used their own native interest in local Newfoundland culture to career-oriented ends, utilising whatever modern medium they had at their disposal to achieve an audience as wide as possible. One suspects that if John Burke had lived a few years longer (he died in 1930), he would have had a radio programme.

¹² "A Bio-Bibliography of Newfoundland Songs in Printed Sources," unpublished MA thesis, M.U.N., St. John's, 1978.

¹³ Omar Blondahl, ed., *Newfoundlanders, Sing!* (St. John's: Robin Hood Flour Mills, 1960).

Chapter 2

The Narratives of a Retired Radio Announcer

Although research has been carried out on the occupational lore of various kinds of workers, little has been done on that of workers whose job is performance. The major approach of modern folkloristics has been the study of performance and the material which is performed, but as some have pointed out, once performance involves labour, then the impulse of folklorists is to ignore it. Neil Rosenberg points out that the radio disc jockey is a performer in the same sense that a musician is.¹ This chapter is concerned with such non-musical performance.

Popular culture traditions in this century have in many cases grown out of folk traditions. Anne and Norm Cohen have shown, for example, that commercially recorded hillbilly records of the 1920s were a natural and continuous growth of the regional folk tradition in the "assembly" mode.² Assembly traditions are those which focus on public performance, in contrast with the

¹Neil V. Rosenberg, "Good Time Charlie and the Bricklin: A Satirical Song in Context," *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*, 4:1 (1978), 27 - 46, in particular p. 38.

²Anne and Norm Cohen, "Folk and Hillbilly Music: Further Notes on their Relation," *JEMF Quarterly*, 13: 46 (1977), 50 - 57.

"domestic tradition," which is performance in private settings. As a result of the sex roles which are common in North American life, these two categories more often than not also correspond to male and female traditions respectively, though more can be made of this than may be useful. By the Cohens' argument the link is made between non-commercial folk music and commercial popular music.

Similarly with non-musical performance of narrative, a link can be made between the non-commercial performance of narratives (the folk tradition) and the commercial performance of them. Recent research in the area of occupational narrative has centred on the non-commercial tradition.

Radio announcers are encountered almost every day in the modern cultural environment. These performers are paid to talk and in so doing provide some combination of entertainment, news, enlightenment and continuity between non-live segments of their programmes. Several different styles of announcing have developed in the sixty years of North American broadcasting and to some extent this development of performative style parallels that of the broadcasting systems themselves. It is not the place of this chapter to discuss the origin and evolution of the different styles, or strains, of performance by radio announcers. However, one might expect that, like what the Cohens found with regard to hillbilly music, a diachronic study of broadcasters would lead back to other public performance roles, such as masters of ceremonies, minstrelsy barkers and debate leaders. Likewise in today's world, talk show hosts and after-dinner speakers have related and overlapping roles.

The following discussion examines the narratives of the late Aubrey MacDonald who, at the time of being interviewed, was a "retired," but still active, radio performer. His career began in the 1930s, near the beginning of broadcasting in Newfoundland and throughout his life, particularly in the years late in life, he utilised his stock of jokes, anecdotes, poems and personal experience narratives to delineate his personal roles and images. To the extent that this chapter analyses the strategic uses of folklore, it is an exercise in rhetorical analysis.³ To the extent that it is an examination of the kinds and texts of narratives in a performer's repertoire, it is a form of repertoire analysis of the type which Goldstein laid out for the study of singers' repertoires. Goldstein showed how song texts can be moved by various forces from active to inactive areas of repertoire, and vice versa. This chapter shows that different versions of the "same" story might be activated in different social contexts, depending on the role being played by the performer.⁴

Aubrey MacDonald was born in Bonavista in 1911. During his boyhood he moved to Placentia and to St. John's as his father, a medical doctor, took new postings. While living in St. John's, his father died. Aubrey's mother sent him to live with his father's brother, another doctor, in St. Peter's, Nova Scotia. Aubrey remained there for nine years. His uncle wanted him to study medicine but

³Roger D. Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 80 (1968), 143 - 158.

⁴Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertoire," *Journal of American Folklore*, 84 (1971), 62 - 67.

Aubrey did not want to. Instead he returned to St. John's where he finished his education at St. Bon's College. According to Aubrey, as his uncle shipped him back to St. John's he said,
 You bloody Newfoundlanders
 For you I have no use.
 Pack up your rags
 In canvas bags,
 And go home on the *Bruce*.

The *Bruce*, Aubrey explained, was the ship which traversed the Gulf, the Cabot Strait, at the time.⁵

Aubrey returned to St. John's in the late 1920s. After completing his schooling he found his first job pumping gas at a local car dealership and he remained at this job for a year. About 1930 he found steadier work with the United Towns Electric Company, a sister company to the Avalon Telephone Company. Both of these companies were owned by the local entrepreneur R. J. Murphy. In 1932 a third Murphy company, the Dominion Broadcasting Company (DBC), began broadcasting from a studio in the same building in which Aubrey worked on McBride's Hill in downtown St. John's. The Manager of the new station was William F. Galgay who stayed with the station through different owners until his death in 1965. Galgay had been previously employed at wiring cinemas for sound.

⁵ MUNFLA Tape C6048/83-236, interview with Aubrey MacDonald, St. John's, 27 October 1983. Another interview with MacDonald, 30 July 1983, is recorded on MUNFLA Tape C6248/83-236.

One day this gentleman came in and put a microphone on my desk. And I said, "That's a microphone." "Yes," he said, "you speak into that." I said, "That what I'd like to do." And that was Mr. Galgay. [MUNFLA Tape C8248/83-236]

Working at the Avalon Telephone Company, and being in close proximity to some of the DBC personnel, Aubrey's interest in broadcasting grew. Several times during the early and mid-1930s he applied for work on the station but was unsuccessful.

Trying to be a radio announcer in the 20's in Newfoundland was almost as bad as trying to walk with no legs.

When we were growing up, regardless of how well we did in school, we were very careless about the way we spoke. The vowels and consonants took an awful beating. The Nfld. accent might have had charm, but it was taboo if you harboured dreams of being a radio announcer. When I first heard my voice on a record, I couldn't detect any charm, rather I was flat, and metallic.

I was working with the Telephone Company when they bought the radio station VOGY, top floor of the Nfld. Hotel. The late Mr. Galgay, who was looking after the machines at the movie houses, was appointed manager and one day he put a microphone on my desk. That was when I decided I wanted to be in radio.

Having the desire, the dream, is one thing, but how does one get the qualifications? There was no school for announcers here; they didn't even teach public speaking in the schools.

I wrote the incomparable Lowell Thomas, and he suggested I attend a school in New York, supervised by Norman Brokenshire. Oh yeah. Go to New York and me getting 20 dollars a month?

My mother was a receptionist at the House of Assembly. Incidentally, Don Jamieson was a messenger boy there at the time. Anyway, Mom got me a loan of number one cabin at the Deer Park, on the Salmonier Line.

I had a biscuit box full of [Readers'] Digests, and day after day, night after night, I'd hide myself to the woods, place a Digest on the limb of a tree, put one hand over my ear, and read out loud, trying to round out my words. I'd read and read and read, until I'd almost fall with exhaustion.

I was at the cabin for a month. When I came home, I applied for a job as a sports announcer. No dice. I'd continue practicing speech. Mr. Cameron, Secretary Treasurer of the Avalon Telephone Company, couldn't read very well, so he'd have me read for him. It was he who influenced the powers that be to give me a chance as a radio announcer.

I became a sports announcer. I took the name Ted Baker. No salary. I worked that way for one year. Then they put me on the staff.⁶

It was in 1936 or 1937 that Aubrey wrote to the popular American broadcaster Lowell Thomas. This began a friendship between the two men which lasted until Thomas died in 1981. When he did get a part-time job on the radio station he kept his full-time job with the Telephone Company. In 1939 the station was nationalised and a larger staff was hired. Aubrey was one of these.

He preferred at first not to use his own name and called himself Ted Baker. This was a common practice in radio as well as in the other media in the 1930s. Another broadcaster of the day, Michael Harrington remembers his own choice of a "radio name":

I had to think hard what I would call myself on the air. For some reason or another the name of Ross Alexander came to my mind. He was a movie star at the time. I guess it was a fantasy, I suppose. Well, I changed it to Ray Alexander because I thought it had a sort of a lilt to it. Rhythmic, poetic. So that was my name. But everybody, well not everybody, but people knew that, who I was. But I thought I'd better inform my new employer, the Commission of Government, that I was a broadcaster at the same time. So I informed them of this and Dr. Mosdell was the Secretary then, Dr. H. M. Mosdell. There was no problem. He realised I wasn't subversive or anything, doing a disc-jockey type of show, which it was.⁷

⁶ Aubrey Mac, "He had a Dream," *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 3: 30 (3 October 1981), 5.

⁷ MUNELA Tape C7807/85-040, interview with Michael Harrington, St. John's, 13 June 1985.

When Aubrey was taken on full-time, in 1939, he began using his own name, Aubrey MacDonald. Gradually his nickname, Mac, began to be used, and in his later life he was better known as "Aubrey Mac" than by his real name.⁸

Aubrey stayed with the newly nationalised Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN) and with its successor, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), until his retirement in 1975. Even after his retirement he continued to broadcast a weekly programme of his favourite music and his own musings until just a few months before his death from cancer in 1984. The weekly programme was called *Nice and Easy* and this reflected his personal style and philosophy. During his retirement he also continued to perform as an after-dinner speaker in St. John's. It was only while he was hospitalised that he stopped working. When he left hospital for a short time, he began again to write and announce his show. He died 26 September 1984 in St. John's at the age of 73.

Jack Santino, in his discussion of the "Characteristics of Occupational Narratives," points out what he sees as the major focusses of narrative he has dealt with.⁹ Although he says these focusses are not categories or subgenres of narrative, they are nonetheless useful descriptors for categorisation. They are: cautionary tales; how-I-got-started and first-day-at-work stories; good old days stories; those about pranks on the job; and anecdotes about characters and heroes.

⁸MUNFLA Tape C6948/83-236.

⁹Jack Santino, "Characteristics of Occupational Narratives," *Western Folklore*, 37:3 (July 1978), 199 - 212.

The narrative repertoire of Aubrey Mac contained all five of these categories as well as at least two others: work technique narratives and those recounting Aubrey's role in or observance of historical events.

Categories of narratives are used by speakers for rhetorical reasons, to improve their images in the eyes of listeners. Aubrey Mac's final narrative category was particularly used in this way. All of them, including the superficially self-deprecating stories which one finds in the categories of pranks or work technique, were used by Aubrey Mac for image-making.

It is important to keep in mind that Santino's categories derive from a body of material told mostly in natural and esoteric contexts, those in which the audience was composed of co-workers. By contrast, Aubrey Mac told the following narratives in a recreated and exoteric context: either in an interview with me, an otherwise unfamiliar student of broadcasting history, or by his own writing for publication in newspapers and weekly magazines. W. H. Jansen has written of the importance of the "esoteric-exoteric" factor in folklore.¹⁰ This intra- and inter-group factor, that is whether Aubrey Mac addressed his comments to someone within the broadcasting in-group or to someone outside, will be seen to be potentially important in the output of one kind of his narratives, those about pranks.

¹⁰William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," *Fabula*, 2 (1959), 205 - 211; reprinted in Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1965, 43 - 51.

It is also well to reiterate Santino's caveat that his categories of narrative are not a generic typology. Instead they are overlapping descriptors of narrative. Almost every narrative in the repertoire of Aubrey Mac served more than one purpose and thereby can be described by more than one of the descriptors. For ease of discussion though, I have followed Santino's procedure and grouped the narratives.

Most of the personal information I collected about Aubrey did not come from the interviews I conducted with him. Even though personal information such as dates of birth, high school graduation and the like were asked for, he did not give me much of this sort of thing when it applied to his own personal life. Even his birthdate I obtained from the official CBC press release in memory of Aubrey Mac, released just after his death.¹¹ Perhaps this lack of personal detail is a function of the level at which narrative creation and production functioned in his mind. I had introduced myself when I called him originally as someone interested in Newfoundland broadcasting and its development, so perhaps the more impersonal topics were thought to be the only legitimate topics of conversation. Direct, personal questions were deflected by the use of one or more anecdotes bringing the conversation between us back into the more neutral ground of dealing with broadcasting in general, rather than the life of Aubrey Mac in particular. Memorates from his own life were often used in this manner to bridge the personal to the general. Aubrey was a skillful user of language and had a

¹¹ "He Will Be Missed," *Evening Telegram*, 28 September 1984, 2.

strong, well-defined public persona. This persona was at least partially controlled by his use of language.

The persona Aubrey projected on the radio programme *Nice and Easy* in his retirement, was that of an elderly, memory-laden, optimistic sage. On that programme he told frequent jokes and gags, as often as not at the expense of women, and in particular of wives. In addition he read inspirational poetry and doggerel between songs and music from an earlier era of popular culture. The themes of his scripts, including the poetry which he read and the jokes he told, were of good cheer and fond memories. Indeed, the theme music of the programme, played at the beginning and end of each show, was an instrumental piano version, by Peter Nero, of the Paul Anka song "My Way." The words of that song describe a life with no regrets. After he died, his death was announced on the local CBN radio station in St. John's with that music playing in the background.¹² A few days later a memorial programme was presented the title of which, as well as its theme music, came from that same recording: *Aubrey Mac: My Way*.¹³ That song represented for Aubrey the persona he wanted to project on his programme.

The words of that song and the programme itself were a reflection of his life. He had been through a broken marriage late in life and the last years of his life were spent in a cramped one-room apartment. His many references on

¹² MUNFLA tape C7420/85-040; recording of CBN *Morning Show*, 27 September 1984.

¹³ MUNFLA tape C7422/85-040, aired 29 September 1984.

Nice and Easy to men's difficult lives with wives must have stemmed in part from his own marital history, although to many listeners they seemed only to reflect the humour and sensibilities of an earlier era. In part, this kind of humour alienated younger listeners. Late in life he was not financially well-off, but perhaps he did not like to question the wisdom of decisions he made earlier in his life. He was quick to point out, however, that many people he knew became material successes, and, significantly, that he helped some of them become successful. When he would mention someone's material success, he would make it clear that it was indeed *material* success he was referring to, and that from the outside one can possess only superficial knowledge about a person. Memories and regrets, material success and spiritual fulfilment—these were the recurrent themes of Aubrey Mac's later programmes and manifestations of the persona he presented in those contexts.

In contrast, this was not the persona projected by Aubrey Mac in the personal setting in which I met him. Nor was it the persona he projected in some other radio situations. An example of the latter is the quarterhour he spent on CBN Radio on Regatta Day, 3 August 1983, talking with Doug Laite, a younger CBN staff announcer.¹⁴ For decades CBN has broadcast the races live from Quidi Vidi Lake and as a sports announcer Aubrey was one of the main

¹⁴Regatta Day in St. John's is an annual municipal holiday on which a series of bostraces are held at Quidi Vidi Lake. A carnival atmosphere fills the area with hundreds of games, raffles and food booths all around the shores of the Lake. Local radio and television stations broadcast live from the site.

participants in that coverage. In conversation with Doug Laité at the Regatta he presented an anecdote-laden persona much like that I found in interviewing him. His anecdotes were predominantly congratulatory of other announcers, now dead or retired from broadcasting, and many were self-deprecating. These narratives fulfill the criteria of Santino's categories of hero and cautionary tales.

A survey of Aubrey Mac's narrative repertoire reveals five predominant categories: cautionary tales; "how I got started in the business" stories; hero tales; and the two mentioned earlier as being outside Santino's schema, work technique and historical events.¹⁵ As well, there are two other categories: prank and good old days stories. Although Aubrey Mac's prank stories can certainly be seen as cautionary tales, the two categories are different enough to be dealt with separately. This is unlike his hero tales which are so closely related to his stories about technique that they have been treated together. These six categories of narrative in Aubrey Mac's repertoire are discussed below.

Techniques of production, manipulation and projection of personae are

¹⁵ He was interviewed for print once: "Questions: Aubrey Mac," *Newfoundland Herald TV Week*, 34: 49 (4 December 1979), 6-7. He wrote two short articles for publication which are relevant here: "Letters: He Had A Dream" *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 3:30 (3 October 1981), 5; and, "The Guest Column: Heroes' Fleeting Paths of Glory," *Daily News*, (St. John's) (12 September 1981), 13. In his earlier years, the late 1940s and early 1950s, he wrote a great deal for the *Sunday Herald*, but this was sports reportage rather than personal narrative: Dee Murphy, "A Great Legacy of Sports Reporting," *The Newfoundland Herald*, 41: 25 (21 June 1986), 108 - 109. A daily series of three-minute excerpts from an interview with him done in hospital a few months before his death was entitled "Mac's Memories", conducted and presented by Ted Withers, *CBN Morning Show*, 14 May 1984 - 1 June 1984.

important to all persons in society, though to a large extent this is unconscious.¹⁶ To performers such as radio announcers, however, it is particularly important and self-conscious. Manipulation of personae helps explain the different kinds of performance we distinguish when a skilled announcer reads the news and covers a hockey game. Each role has a discrete, traditional style associated with it and the way a performer adapts his skills to the role reflects the particular persona he wishes to project in the role. On radio one has only one's voice and verbal skills with which to do this. Narratives and narrative techniques are peculiarly important to the radio announcer for this reason.¹⁷

Since radio announcing is not normally a physically dangerous activity, we would not expect to find stories among announcers which deal with life-threatening situations. Santino notes that in work contexts in which physical danger is not present narratives evolve which focus on "socially uncomfortable" situations.¹⁸ Of the eight narratives of Aubrey Mac I have isolated and identified as "cautionary tales", only one deals with anything like physical danger, and that a mild form. After Confederation the radio station had moved its studios from the Newfoundland Hotel and

¹⁶ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1959), pp. 252 - 255. Goffman never uses the term "persona"; rather he uses at various times the terms "face," "impression," "role," "character," and "mask." I have used the somewhat more generic "persona" in order to have a single, useful term.

¹⁷ One might note that the type of television broadcaster with the greatest degree of vocal modulation is the sports reporter. This is for exactly this reason: he has only his voice to convey meaning.

¹⁸ Santino, "Characteristics," p. 205.

we had temporary facilities down in the old Minard's Liniment Building down on Water Street East, where there was great big sewer rats going around every day. And I remember reading a news bulletin one day in this little old room. And something happened to the plumbing upstairs, and I was reading about a flood in Oklahoma, when all the water from the plumbing came down on my head. And I thought for sure I was in Oklahoma. [LAUGHS.] Those were some of the things that happened at that old Minard's Liniment Building. [C6948/83-2348]

Even if there is little physical danger in radio announcing there is constant pressure to present the best product to the listening public.. As in any line of duty one is apt to be passed over if one's job does not get done. One of Aubrey's cautionary narratives deals with being called into the office of his boss, William F. Galgay, after playing a tape recording of his announcing a hockey game.

Another time I was down to the Stadium, see? And I taped a hockey game. And I brought the tape back and I went into Mr. Galgay in his office, see he had a machine in there. I said, "Would you mind if I piped this hockey game that I did into your office? So you can give me your opinion as to how I did?" He says, "All right." So I piped it in. And I waited and waited to see what his reaction would be. I went in. He said, "Aubrey." "Yes sir." "You know that hockey game you piped into my office?" "Yes sir." "Well," he said, "pipe it out again." [PH LAUGHS] He said, "By the way, it was a very good job you did except you didn't tell us the score." [LAUGHS] "I didn't tell you the score?" "No. Everytime a fella scored you used to say, 'Well! Isn't that marvellous!' [CLAPPING] And you became a spectator instead of an announcer. You didn't tell us who scored the goal." "Oh my God, I forgot." He said, "I think we'll have to leave it to Bob Cole." [C6248/83-236]

Bob Cole later became a very highly-respected national broadcaster of hockey

games for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and was a local celebrity.¹⁹

Here Aubrey is not only making a cautionary statement about how an announcer does his job (he must not become a spectator), he is also providing an aetiological legend about a local hero.

The boss has control over one's future and perforce is someone whom one is wary of offending. In the following connected series of shorter narratives, Aubrey tells how close he came several times to being fired. The series ends not with self-deprecation but with an affirmation of his abilities as an announcer, and that at a national rather than local level.

Are you surprised that I was, ahh, ahh, fired nine times? I was fired for several things. [PH: Is that right? But they took you back everytime?] Mr. Galgay gave me two dollars one day to go down in the restaurant where Don Jamieson's mother was the manager. Get him a package of Lucky Strikes. And I got back in one week's time. [PH: What happened?] What? [What happened?] I met Geoff Stirling, boy, and we went to a party and we went from one house to another and I wound up in Topsail somewhere, I don't know where I wound up. Mrs. Captain Olsen's, that's right, yeah. [PH LAUGHS. And you didn't come back for a week?] One week. That was a terrible thing, trying to go back. God. So anyway on another occasion he called me in the office. He had my resignation written out on the desk. [PH: He wanted you to sign it?] He had my resignation out on the desk. He said, "You're forcing my hand. Brophy won't work for you." This is Doug Brophy. "Derm Breen won't work with you. The operators are fed up with you. You're putting on the wrong discs. And there was a blind man gave a talk the other morning and he was two minutes short and you put on a record called 'I Only Have Eyes For You'." [LAUGHTER]

¹⁹On Cole's career see John Vincent, "Bob Cole Talks Hockey: Putting the Game into Words," *Newfoundland Lifestyle*, 2: 1 (1984), 24-27, 52. See also Eugene P. Kennedy, "Robert C. Cole," in J. R. Smallwood and R. D. Pitt, eds., *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, 1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1981), 477.

[PH: Gee!] [LAUGHING:] He said, "What are we gonna do with you? It's either my job or yours." Now, he was, he was eating some toast and having a cup of tea that were brought up from the restaurant. And, [LAUGHING] and I reached over and took a piece of toast, see?, and he [SLAPS HIS HAND] hit me on the hand. "What are you trying to do?" I said, "I'm having the Last Supper." [PH LAUGHS] He started laughing. "Get out of here!" he said. "Get out of here!" and he kept me on. Kept me on. The next day he called me in. I said, "This is it. I'm finished." He said, "You're going to Toronto tomorrow." I couldn't believe what I heard. He said, "I'm putting my job on the line." This was 1951, 1950. First birthday of Confederation. They wanted a Newfoundland announcer for a special programme to be originated from Toronto. He said, "Get ready. You're leaving tomorrow. Now," he said, "if you let me down, I'll lose my job. They're calling me a fool. I'm taking a terrible chance but I'm going to do it." You know what? I was a sensation. They got a tape of that down there. I was a sensation. [PH: And that was on the network?] On the whole network. J. Frank Willis was the producer. Tremendous fella. Tremendous. The Scott Singers. Leslie Bennett Singers: Howard Cable Orchestra. Gisele MacKenzie, the great singer who wound up with Jack Benny. Another tenor. Comedian. Someone else. But I was the announcer. My heart going like that [CLAPS HIS HAND THREE TIMES]. [PH: And you announced it.] I never took a drink. Never went to a pub. All in a dress suit. Boy, the fanfare when that opened. Howard Cable, when the big fanfare and he pointed that baton at me, nearly frightened me to death. And John Ray, the great announcer was to introduce me but he couldn't. And I announced the whole show. And I was a sensation! I came home a hero! Yeah. J. Frank Willis, boy, he was proud of me, there was no doubt about it. Ahh, we had, we had a dress suit rehearsal, you know, a "dry run" they call it. And then the other thing. I'd like to hear that again, you know. Why don't they put that on? That was very historic. Why didn't they put that on in the Fifty Years of Radio when they were celebrating? I can't understand that. There'll never be another thing like that. [C6948/83-236]

Although, as noted earlier, there are few physical dangers inherent in and peculiar to the job of announcing, there certainly are personal dangers. One programme for which Aubrey was the announcer was sponsored by the appliance

and home oil dealer, Great Eastern Oil. In an interview aired after his death, he told another staff announcer at CBN, Dennis Budgell, that the programme, called *The Bargain Hour* was on the air for fifteen years.

The *Bargain Hour* was as long as that, too. That was a big foolscap, about six of them, you know. "For Sale, For Sale, Wanted, For Sale, For Sale, For Sale." Yes. And they took a ten thousand dollar case against me for having allegedly hurting a man's character. You see, I'll tell you what they were doing up there at Great Eastern Oil. They'd put this little piece of paper on one of the pages and this would be "Wanted the whereabouts of So-and-so." And meant as a way of collecting, collecting old debts, I guess. You see? So I read that, but I knew there was something wrong about that. Ehh. I went into the Boss and he said, "Well, tame it down, tone it down a bit." I couldn't tone it; I left the word "Wanted" off it. Anyway, they took a case against the Great Eastern Oil, and I was the, the chief witness. One of the lawyers, he said, "Look this is what you read from, isn't it? This is the paper." I said, "Look here, sir, I read a lot of things in my day." "Is it or isn't it?" "Well, you don't think," (all the pinky crowd were there, you know, see?). [DB LAUGHS] I said, [SMILING] I really, now I'm going to get really dramatic, now. Really dramatic. "Ladies and gentlemen, members of the jury, your worship; do you think I could with malice say anything bad about anybody, when my slogan down through the years has been 'If you can't take part in sport, be a good one anyway!'" Ohh, the pinky crowd went up! [LAUGHING] Gonna clear the courtroom. When I won the case and gave, I had to lend the fellow who took the case against me, I lent him a dollar to go home in a taxi.²⁰

The instantaneous nature of radio often makes planning difficult, a problem which can also be dangerous. In another cautionary story, Aubrey tells of incurring the wrath of Mr. Galgay for setting the kitchen on fire at the station.

²⁰ Aubrey Mac: *My Way*, CBN radio, 29 September 1984, MUNFLA tape C7422/85-040. The "pinky crowd" were street alcoholics who, named for the colour of their favourite wine, often spent bad weather days being entertained in the courtrooms.

Yes, I do the little programme *Nice and Easy* every Saturday. I heard myself today. [PH: Yeah. I heard it today, too. You told a nice story about the bacon and eggs.] By Jesus I'll never forget that. That was one of the times I was nearly fired. [PH: How did that happen?] Well, we had a stove down there, a stove. And it had three speeds on it, great big- it was a powerful stove, that was. You had to be careful, you know. And I put on a bacon and eggs and I had no milk and the store was only up the stairs. Miss Power up on Henry Street. And I ran up to get some milk, it was only a minute. Yes, when I came back a fella stood in my way in the lobby... with a news bulletin. He said, "Boy, look here. There's no one around to read the news bulletin." There was only a minute left before airtime. I forgot all about the bacon and eggs, see? See, the news was going out on the radio and everything and it took my mind off the bacon and eggs. My gee and when I got on the air I had about a page read when I thought about the bacon and eggs. Well, blessed God. Because that's a powerful stove. And I had it on medium and all. There's one, medium, and high. If I had it on high it would have burnt the whole building down, I'm sure. It was so powerful. . . . It was electric. Three speeds. Oh, terrible, dangerous stove. Powerful. And when I realised this, there's a cough switch. I turned off the mike and yelled to Bob Ross. Bob was about four hundred pounds. And I called him in, "Bob, for the love of God, go downstairs, quick, and turn off that stove." So, I kept on reading the news and Bob went down and he [came] back and looked at me through the glass. [PH: He just waved at you?] He said, "Boy, you're going to be killed, you are." Well, I had to turn off the mike again and ask him what he was talking about. He said, "Boy, I can't find the rest room for smoke." How I ever got through the rest of that bulletin, I don't know. When I went downstairs well, what a mess! Newsroom, there was a newsroom right opposite, yes and the newsroom was full of smoke, every place. And Mr. Galgay was down there and his secretary and Dick O'Brien. And the stove. The wall was all bubbles. [PH: Oh no. It burst into flames, did it?] No. No flames. Heat. My God, the power of that stove. The bacon and eggs disappeared, the frying pan disappeared. The frying pan was only a little, a little bit of steel. Jesus, I got out of that one, but that was a rough one, that was. [PH: Did he say, did Mr. Galgay say anything to you?] Well, you know how he was disgusted about that. So they, he closed the rest room for a few days. And he forbid me ever again to cook anything down there. So. That was a perfectly normal mistake to make, wasn't it? I mean I

should've thought about the bacon and eggs, you know, I could've said to the fella who gave me the news, "Alright, I'll do the news, but for God's sake go downstairs and turn off that machine. Turn off the stove." [PH: But you don't think of those things.] I never thought about it. No. All I was thinking about was doing the, reading the news bulletin. [C6248/83-236]

It is important for a radio announcer to have read through and practised his scripts before air time. An uncalled-for hesitation, a misplaced oral comma, can lead to accidental changes of meaning.

Like one day I read, "Mr. so and so of Burlington would like to thank all those who had anything to do with the death of his wife." And in another one the comma was in the wrong place. It should have been, "Dear John: Not getting any better. Please come home." Instead of that it read, "Dear John: Not getting any, better come home." Then there were For Sale items, one of which read, "For sale: a piano by a woman with square legs." These were all bloopers committed on the Gerald S. Doyle Bulletin.²¹

The blooper is clearly a significant folk category of cautionary personal experience narrative for Aubrey Mac. It is a type of accident story in occupational lore. The term "blooper" refers to the sound which radio and television stations often use to cover up words which they want not to be broadcast, words such as curses or other vulgarity. It came to mean any broadcast mistake, particularly if it was funny or suggestive. The term was popularised in the late 1950s by broadcaster Kermit Shafer who published three books and

²¹ Questions: Aubrey Mac, "Herald, p. 7.

several records of "bloopers" from the mass media.²² The blooper is not simply the itemizing or cataloguing of mistakes; it has a narrative form *séparate* from the simple recording of such a mistake.

Not all of Aubrey Mac's cautionary tales were told in the first person. The following one, a blooper story, is about Harry Brown, another CBN staff announcer. Before working at CBN, Brown was the host of a VOCM children's programme.

When he was on VOCM he was "Uncle Harry." [PH: That's what he was fired for, wasn't it?] Well they say, I don't know if that's true or not. They say, "That'll do the little bastards." [LAUGHTER] [PH: "That'll do the little bastards?"] Yeah. "That's enough for the little bastards." [LAUGHTER] Y'know, it's no trouble for a mike to stay open. You got to be very careful, boy, with the mike. It's up to the operator, he might forget to turn it off. [C6948/83-236]

This story is reported widely, attributed to several different children's show hosts. It is an example of the migratory legend in modern folklore. In the United States, Kermit Shafer cites it in one of his compendia of bloopers and Erving Goffman uses it in his discussion of radio announcers and their "forms of talk".²³ In a recent compendium of modern legends, its veracity is denied while the authors note that the comment has been attributed to "virtually every local children's-

²² Kermit Shafer, *Pardon My Blooper* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1959); *Super Bloopers*, (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1963); and *Prize Bloopers*, (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1965). One of Shafer's blooper records, *Super Bloopers*, vol. II, K-Tel NC-417B, is in MÜNFLA's record collection, disc R1297da.

²³ Shafer's version is in *Pardon My Blooper*, p. 18. For Goffman's, see "Radio Talk," in *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1981), p. 267.

show host* in the United States.²⁴ Here, at my prompting, Aubrey has passed it off as apocryphal rumour rather than history. However, the cautionary nature of the anecdote is brought home by his warning that the announcer has to be careful about such things. Clearly, from the way he laughed while telling this, Aubrey felt quite sympathetic with Harry Brown in the situation—he might have done the same thing himself.

Another cautionary tale from Aubrey Mac's repertoire deals with the announcer's problem of being a purveyor of information in wartime, when such information is rationed. During the Second World War strict censorship was placed on all aired matter.²⁵ Nothing was allowed to be ad-libbed, and all scripts had to be sent through the Censor's office first. Information on shipping movements was particularly offensive to the Censor's ears. Wilson Hörwood was the reader of one of the main foreign news broadcasts, the *Marshall Motors News*.

One night, during the War, it was during the blackout, he [Wilson] went over to the shutter and he looked out. And he saw a big ship moored over by the Southside. And he took a few notes on a piece of paper and he went on radio and he said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, just to show you how close we are to war, there's a big ship out there by the Southside." As it so happened this ship was the S. S. *Batory*, with all

²⁴ Hal Morgan and Kerry Tucker, *Rumors!* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 92 - 94.

²⁵ On wartime censorship in Newfoundland, and particularly on Newfoundland radio, see my interviews with Melvin Rowe, a news operator at the time, who later became regional manager of current affairs for the Newfoundland CBC (14 November 1983; MUNFLA tapes C6954 and C6955/83-236); and with former Chief Justice Robert S. Furlong, who was Chief Censor at the time (4 October 1984; MUNFLA tape C7429/85-040).

the bullion, all the money in England, of England on board. And they were taking that money to Bell Island for safe-keeping until the War ended. And Wilson was suspended for two weeks for giving this out, this information. [PH: Why did he do it? He must have known.] He really didn't think. That's all. He just didn't think. He just went on and said, "The War is very close, very-close to Newfoundland," and "This ship is out there." But that was, that was a secret, that was. You couldn't go on [the air with that]. [C6648/83-236]

A comparison of Aubrey Mac's version of this story with that of Melvin Rowe reveal differences of style and content. During the same period, Rowe worked as a wireless press operator at VONF, taking news off the wireless press service transmissions and typing them into scripts for the announcers to read.

I'll tell you a little story. It was as soon as the War started, I think it was the third of September, '39. The Newfoundland Government, of course it was an entity unto itself then, you know. Other than that it was under the British rule or domination. It was Commission of Government, you see? We'd lost our status as an independent nation. Immediately instructions were issued: everything had to be censored, not one word could be spoken over the radio, not one, without it had the approval of the Chief Censor. Now the Chief Censor at that time was Bernard Summers. He used to be, he was Deputy Minister of Justice. And Bob Furlong... was Censor for radio stations. And he had an office down on the sixth floor of the Hotel, where we were stationed. And you had to take everything to Furlong for his approval. And if he took it and looked at it and he didn't like it he'd probably take the whole thing and tear it up. You were left with nothing. This time, I remember quite well, I was looking out the -; the War hadn't actually been declared, but we knew it was coming, it'd be a matter of a day or two. [PH: This was right at the beginning of September, then?] Yeah, we'd always get warnings or, you know. So, I looked out the window and I saw this beautiful liner coming in the Narrows. Oh my golly she was a beauty, yeah. She had a green streak down her, with white upper structure, black with this green stripe, y'know, right down from the anchor, right to the stern. Oh, beautiful boat. She was alive with passengers. And she came in about one o'clock in the day and Wilson Horwood, he was a commentator. Now, as I say, they didn't employ

censorship because the War hadn't been declared.²⁶ And of course Wilson thought there was no harm in going through. Now the studio was on the front, see? The broadcast studio was on the front of the building [the Newfoundland Hotel], so you could look out and see the *Batory*, that was her name, come steaming up, boy!, so graciously. Gee, what a beautiful ship. Polish registry; she was registered in Gdynia in Poland. The town was a free port, you know at that time. And he, so he got a little dramatic, a little overcome, you know, and he said, he started something like this: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the War is not so far away as you seem to think it is. Yes, as I talk to you this very moment, I'm looking out over the Harbour of St. John's. I can see a beautiful ship, a liner coming in the Narrows now and I'll see if I can pick out the name." And he started to spell it out. "Oh, oh, oh yes," he said, "a B." And he spelled it out: "B-A-T-O-R-Y," you know. "Now," he said, "That's it," he said, "just to show you the imminence of War. What its consequences will be God only knows." You know, he went on like that. So, it wasn't his fault because actually we weren't under censorship but if he'd have used a little savvy, maybe, well, I suppose he got a little overcome. Anyway, they kicked him off the air for a week. [PH: Oh no.]: Yeah, but now, there's a sequel to that story. Well, of course, we didn't know what was going on. Although we were in pretty close touch with what was going on because we used to do a lot of intercepting in our spare time. Picking up German submarines, German ships, warships. As a matter of fact the *Graf Spey*, I picked her up down off Buenos Aires and I gave it to the Canadian Navy. They were on the fifth floor. This is why they wanted everything. They got all excited. But anyway, this ship, this *Batory*, it was the *Batory*. She was bringing from England, taking to Montreal all the gold that was in the Bank of England. And they stored it in the vaults of the Sun Life Building on Dominion Square in Montreal all during the War. But anyway, she got out of St. John's, she got to Montreal. Supposing she'd have got torpedoed on the way along. That's a factual story. That's not a romance. But, I'm sure we didn't know it at the time. [PH: And Wilson Horwood sure didn't.] She came in for probably for some reason. Because the War hadn't begun. But I believe it was the next day or the next day after it started. But she slipped out at night and she went on to [Montreal]. She, I think, she went through the

²⁶It is not clear exactly why Horwood got in trouble if censorship and war had not yet been declared. Perhaps Rowe is confusing two different events.

War, as a matter of fact. [PH: I bet Wilson Horwood didn't feel too good about that.] You couldn't, oh no, you couldn't fault the man, I suppose, like if you were describing a boat race down at Quidi Vidi. We thought it was perfectly alright, and to be frank, we didn't know the difference. [C6955/83-236.]

By comparison with Rowe's, Aubrey Mac's story of this incident seems skeletal. Rowe's is a great deal more discursive, explicit and even tangential in its development. Robert McCarl, Jr., suggests that there exists in occupational narrative a continuum of elaborative style between substance and ceremony, or between conversation and "full performance."²⁷ Aubrey's narrative is delivered in a more "substantive", less elaborated style. On the other hand, Rowe's narrative of the same event is given in a more "performative" style, with greater elaboration. Context and personality are major factors in particular narrative performances. Among insiders narratives may only have to be referred to, rather than recited *in toto*, for their effect to be felt. On the other hand, performance of an esoteric narrative to outsiders may be constrained by a perceived lack of interest or knowledge on the part of listeners.

Lawrence Small has shown this same "accordion effect" of narrative in a small community context.²⁸ He found longer, more narrative genres were reduced to shorter, less narrative genres in certain contexts. For example a local legend might be referred to simply as a proverb which pointed out a culturally

²⁷ Robert McCarl, Jr., "Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis," *Western Folklore*, 37:3 (1978), 159.

²⁸ Lawrence G. Small, "Traditional Expressions in a Newfoundland Community: Genre Change and Functional Variability," *Language and Literature*, 2: 3 (1975), 15 - 18.

salient feature of the fuller form. Aubrey Mac's story contains all the salient features of the story, while Rowe's story contains a great deal more narrative detail, a surprising fact given that Aubrey Mac was a professional performer and Rowe is not. Too, the contexts of the two interviews seem similar: an otherwise unfamiliar student visiting them in their homes in order to interview them about their experiences in broadcasting.

The explanation of this difference in performative detail may lie in the fact that Aubrey Mac, upon being asked to be interviewed about his profession, already had in stock a set of narratives, needing no preliminary checking and updating. He assumed I already knew something of the time, and felt able to give a substantive performance. Rowe, on the other hand, is a local historian of his home community, and serves as a focal point for many younger researchers in and from that community.²⁹ Upon being asked to be interviewed about his life in broadcasting, Rowe would have thought of it in educational terms, a chance to perform as historian. His narrative, then, can be seen as a pedagogical device, designed deliberately to pass on to a younger generation information about his world.

²⁹ The day I visited him I waited a few minutes as he dealt with one such researcher who asked him about ship-building in their community, Heart's Content, Trinity Bay. Rowe has published a book on the history of that community, *I Have Touched The Greatest Ship* (St. John's: Town Crier, 1976), as well as given historical lectures about the history of Newfoundland communications. See, for example, "In Quest of Foreign News," speech to the Kiwanis Club of St. John's, 20 April 1976 (on file, CNS, MUN). He has likewise published articles on former premier J. R. Smallwood and on the trans-Atlantic cable.

Besides cautionary tales, stories representing the beginnings of personal careers are a meaningful category of Aubrey's narrative repertoire. Martin Laba also shows this kind of story to be an important one for off-duty broadcasters in St. John's.³⁰ These aetiological legends and memorates form a central core of the folk history of the occupation.

Among the narratives contained in two taped interviews and several broadcast programmes and printed items, Aubrey Mac tells his own "getting started" story five times. The similarities among the versions are great, although the length varies considerably. Different versions of the "same" story by a single speaker are not the same phenomenon as different versions by different speakers. Instead they represent manifestations of a single underlying psychological reality, a proto-narration which remains inside the mind of the speaker.

David Buchan recognised this normal mutability of text with regard to the ballad among members of oral cultures. For him the reality of the ballad was an underlying form, not the text as sung:

The oral poet does not share the print-oriented man's belief that the words are the story. For him, the story is a conceptual entity whose essence may be readily and accurately conveyed by different word-groups. He is not so concerned with the minor incidents of the the lines as he is with the major events of the ballad; he is not so concerned with

³⁰ Martin Laba, "Narrative and Talk: A Study in Folkloric Communication of Everyday Conversational Exchange," PhD dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983, pp. 92 - 99.

—truth to the minor facts as he is with truth to the major emotions.³¹

Although Buchan would suggest that modern North America is a society which has moved out of this historical-cultural phase of orality, certain genres clearly remain "oral" in exactly this sense. The personal experience narrative is one of these, but certainly such other forms as legends and jokes are, too.

Different narrations, by the same performer, of the same events are in a paradigmatic relationship with each other in that they are variable forms in differing contexts.³² A paradigmatic study of narrative yields information concerning the creation, distribution and use of expressive forms.

The other side of this is the relationships that exist among narratives told in a string. Exactly how one narrative leads into another, the syntax of narration, also tells us about the narrative and the narrator. These relationships are syntagmatic ones. One narrative may differ from another not only paradigmatically, that is to say because it is used in a different context and shows

³¹David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 158. Italics in original.

³²Here I am using the terminology of linguistics. A paradigm is an analytical unit which includes all the varying forms of a linguistic form such as the verb "To be": am, art, is, are. See, for example, Geoffrey Leech, *Semantics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 12): "... language is organized... on what linguists have termed the PARADIGMATIC (or selectional) and SYNTAGMATIC (or combinatory) axes of linguistic structure." (Capitals in original.) Dwight Bollinger (*Aspects of Language*, 2nd ed. [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975], p.27) describes the two aspects as being "vertical" and "horizontal sets." For Bollinger a syntagm is "any unit or coherent group of units along the horizontal line," and the paradigm is "a selection set including semantic selection sets such as days of the week or the numerals."

differences because of context, but also syntagmatically, which is to say because it is a narrative on a different subject but used in an equivalent context. Within a single interview, Aubrey Mac told me many stories, all in syntagmatic relationships with each other. The juxtaposition of stories was deliberate and served rhetorical or other purposes. One narrative often led into another by virtue of content or reference.

From interview to interview, Aubrey told me the "same stories" more than once. Two versions of Aubrey's getting started story have already been quoted.³³ The following version is a little more developed:

In the early thirties Mr. Galgay, W.F. Galgay, who was once a full-fledged Christian Brother, left the Christian Brothers and went to Northern Electric and took a course in electronics. And he used to go up to the different theatres servicing the equipment. And he used to come in to the office where I worked. And one day he came in with a microphone. It was a square, box-like microphone. And I didn't know what it was, really, at the time. And it was kinda heavy, so he put it on my desk. And I said, "Sir, what's that?" He said, "That's a microphone. You speak over that." I said, "I'd like to speak over that microphone. That's what I'd like to do." Now in the meantime, the Avalon Telephone Company bought the radio station on the sixth floor of the Newfoundland Hotel. It was owned by Frank Wood. It was only a hundred watter. And they bought it. And they asked Mr. Galgay to be the manager. Now I became very, very interested in wanting to be a radio announcer. But I didn't have the qualifications. I wasn't educated enough. And my articulation was bad. My pronunciation was bad. My enunciation was bad. And, ehh, we Newfoundlanders were very careless about our pronunciation when we were going to school, you know. "Dis" and "dat" and "wher" are ya?" and flat. Metallic. So, I decided I was going to do something about it. So my mother was working with ah, as a telephone operator with the Department of

³³ See pp. 15-17, above.

Public Works. And she got a lead of a cabin for me up on the Salmonier Line. So I got a box of *Reader's Digests* and I went up there for a month. And I practised speech. Trying to enunciate. And trying to round out my vowels and consonants and eh, when I thought that I was good enough to be an announcer I came back. But it wasn't that easy. However I did get a job with VOGY as a sports announcer for which I wasn't paid. But I didn't care because I loved it. And I went on under an assumed name, Ted Baker. And I worked for nothing until 1939. When the War started they put me on salary: forty dollars a month.³⁴

This version contains most of the major points which are included in the other versions, but it is not complete. In the two printed versions a detail is added about a man who "influenced the powers that be" to get Aubrey on as an unpaid reader.³⁵ Whether it is simply accidental that this detail turns up in his printed, but not in his oral, versions is not known. However, Aubrey may have felt that written forms are more formal than oral ones, a common attitude in our literate culture, and that in that context he must pay tribute to the person who made it possible for him to find and begin a career. In the more informal oral context he would have felt no such need.

Aubrey Mac narrated about the beginnings of careers other than his own. An implicit reference to his role in the rise of Bob Cole's career has been

³⁴ This version is taken from the recording of my 27 November 1983 interview with Aubrey MacDonald, MUNFLA tape C6948/83-236. The other versions are the 30 July 1983 interview, MUNFLA tape 6248/83-236; *Aubrey Mac - My Way*, CBN Radio, 29 September 1984, MUNFLA tape C7422/85-040; "He Had A Dream, *Newfoundland TV Topics*, 3: 30 (3 October 1981), 5; and, "Questions: Aubrey Mac," *Newfoundland Herald TV Week*, 34: 40 (4 December 1979), 7.

³⁵ See the version above, p. 17.

cited.³⁶ He also portrayed his role in the debut of Don Jamieson who had an illustrious career outside local broadcasting, becoming a politician and diplomat. The context of Aubrey's narrative is what Aubrey sees as a kind of "disgrace": Jamieson had recently lost the political fight for Economic Union with the United States. Aubrey shared the task of announcing sporting events with him, allowing him to get started again.

I remember one morning I got a cable from Halifax. They told me that I had to go down to the ballpark that night and broadcast a wrestling match. And I had a hangover from a party before. I didn't know the first thing about wrestling. And I went up to the Balsam Hotel, and I had the wrestler tell me, show me a few holds. He threw me up in the air. He twisted me; turned me around. God. Anyway, I went back and I said, "I can't do that." Don Jamieson was out of work. I phoned him up. I said, "Would you like to make ten dollars?" "What have I got to do?" "Will you come down to the ballpark tonight and do a blow-by-blow of the wrestling match? And I'll do the commercials for Simpson's." He said, "Pick me up." I picked him up and on the way down thousands of people down there. Beautiful night. The wrestling ring up by home plate, people everywhere. Now Don was in disgrace then--he'd lost Economic Union with the United States. He and Geoff [Stirling] tried to get that. And Don used to go up in an airplane, drop leaflets. And Andy Crosbie's father sponsored it. So when Don failed Ches Crosbie didn't want him anymore. So he was out of work. And going down he said to me, "I'll talk my way back again," he said. "I'll talk my way back again. And I'm not going to give up." So the wrestling match began. He didn't know one hold from another. He said to me, he said, "Boy you gotta keep talking. That's what you got to do." Boy, he talked so fast that one of the wrestlers bent down and said, "Sonny, slow down. I can't keep up witcha." I don't know if that's true or not.[C6248/83-236]

³⁶See p. 26, above.

The most popular programme which Aubrey Mac had during his career was *Heartbeats of Sport*, which he read for about twenty years. In the following aetiological narrative he tells how he first heard the programme and arranged to get the scripts for his own use. Although it does not deal specifically with his getting into broadcasting, it does deal with an important part of his career aetiology, the beginning of the programme for which he was most famous.

Heartbeats came later. I, eh, you see, they put me on the staff in 1939. That's when the War started. When the Government, the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, took over [from the Avalon Telephone Company station] and opened VONF. That was ten thousand watts. But they still had VOGY. We called that the "pup." Called that the "pup" and that used to come on when the, when the big station would cut out. They used to use that. And then I was over in Carbonear one day. Ahh, Mrs., Mrs. Walter Tilley. It was about one o'clock in the day. And the radio was on. In those days you know, reception was fabulous in those days. You could get, you could get foreign on a matchbox, almost. And I heard this voice, telling stories, *Heartbeats of Sport*. I was, "God," I said, "Mrs. Tilley, turn that up!" And that was Bill Stern telling his dramatic sport stories. Well I wrote him. And wrote him. And wrote him. And wrote him. And he finally put me on to his sports writer, and that sports writer and I developed a great friendship. [PH: Who was that?] Mack Davis was his name. He wrote all the stuff for Mel Allen, for Ted Hasing, for ah, Canadians, sports writers, broadcasters. But where Bill Stern paid fifty dollars for a story, Mack used to give them to me for ten dollars each -- ten dollars for forty! My! Fantastic stories, they were. But boy I told them for twenty years. More than twenty. . . . Right up to the time we got television. Right up until the sixties. [C6248/83-236]

The sign-off which Aubrey used for this programme throughout its life was that which he referred to above, in his narrative about going to court, "If you can't take part in sport, be a good one anyway."³⁷ He explained that it was not

³⁷ See p. 28, above.


he who originated this curtain line. Rather he was given it by a young Jewish man, down [at] the Newfoundland Hotel. "[C7422/85-040]

According to Santino, a third focus for occupational narrative, the "good old days," refers not to life in general, but rather to the "golden age" of the occupation. In a brief comment Aubrey associated the two, radio's old days and the innocence of Newfoundland society as it was. Preceding these comments were remarks about the famous American radio commentators such as Gabriel Heatter who were "idolised" in Newfoundland.

You see, they were idolised because, eh, they were our only contact, our only link with the outside world. You know, because after all, we lived in isolation. There were no airplanes or anything then. There was nothing only the train. And the outside world was, was -- we knew nothing about the outside world. But my God, we thought that Ayre & Sons was the tallest building in the world. We thought that St. Bon's was the best hockey team in North America. Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis a folly to be wise. We enjoyed ourselves. We had our own heroes and heroines, and we, we enjoyed our lives. [C6248/83-236]

A corollary of the "good old days" is the feeling that life and work have deteriorated since then:

And all those great shows. We used to have some great fun. I mean, you know, you don't like to live in the past, but I don't think, I think that was a golden era, don't you? I mean today, I was in a house last night, Fraser Diamond. Fraser Diamond. Thirty-four years ago Fraser Diamond was in radio, now technician. Fraser and I started together. But he can't be retired because he is only 58 years old. And if he retires now he won't get full pension. . . . I said, "Fraser, what's it like down there now compared to the old days?" "Oh my God," he said, "you're a robot now. Nobody knows anybody now." No. There's no camaraderie now. It was like an old family before. "I hear your mother got a cold, Aubrey." Nothing like that now. Everything is, is



stereotyped. Impersonal. I go down there once a week to do my programme. My approach doesn't go over today. [PH: It's different from the new style.] Doesn't go over today at all. They look at you as if, as if you, they'll growl at you. Now where are they going to? None of them are going anywhere. They're only small potatoes. Should hear the announcers in the States. [C6948/83-236]

Here Aubrey is pointing out that he feels that local radio personnel do not measure up to those in the United States. Just as there is a temporally far-away golden age, there is also a spatially far-away place of great radio announcers.

Although they are not stories as such, the following two versions of the same descriptive commentary by Aubrey Mac serve to describe his view of broadcasting's better days. For Aubrey the golden era of broadcasting in Newfoundland was during the 1940s, and especially during the War.

A new era opened up in 1941 when the first American troops arrived on the ship *Edmund B. Alexander*. That was just before they built Fort Pepperrell, which was the biggest base, biggest base, all the bases that America built. And on that Base they installed a radio station, VOUS. Famous radio station. Famous for its programmes. Armed Forces Radio Service came through VOUS. Well, all the great shows with no commercials. *Lux Radio Theatre*. *It Pays To Be Ignorant*. *The Bill Stern Show*. *The Bing Crosby Show*. *The Milton Berle Show*. All those great shows but no commercials. A jeep full of them, a jeep full of them used to come up to us and we'd send them to Goose Bay. I remember one of the top announcers, Buddy Rice, he hosted a show from the USO on Harvey Road each Saturday night entitled, *Stand By For -- ACTION* [C6948/83-236]

In an earlier interview Aubrey performed this same narration in a more conversational style and with a few other details. It might be noted that several times during the later interview (from which the excerpt above was taken) Aubrey resorted to a typed prompting script he had prepared before I arrived. During

the course of the interview, which was about ninety minutes long, he was able to read all the script, although with a great deal of extemporising. In the earlier interview he had no notes. The prompted performance was somewhat less detailed than the natural, unprompted one which may indicate that the prompting script actually served to structure his performance. What follows is the more naturally flowing, unprompted performance of the narrative.

And then, you know, in 1939, 'twould be 1939, with the War, we got Armed Forces Radio Service. Then we had VOUS, down in Pepperrell. They had the top shows. [PH: Did they bring them in on transcription discs?] They'd bring them in on transcripts. If I had them, I had to have anything up here, I could have had them piled to the ceiling, now, with those transcripts. Invaluable. My God. *Amos and Andy*. *The Luz Radio Theatre*. *Command Performance USA*. Bill Stern. Ted Husing. *It Pays To Be Ignorant*. All the big bands. *The Bing Crosby Show*. Sammy Kaye. All the sports programmes, the big fights. My God, we used to get jeep loads of them from VOUS. We'd use them and send them to Goose Bay. See? And at the end of the War Washington sent out a notice that they had to be destroyed. Went down and threw them over the wharf. Millions of dollars worth of talent. Millions. [C6248/83-236]

Aubrey Mac's fourth focus of narrative is that of pranks. Perhaps the most common traditional pranks in radio studios are those which force an announcer to laugh while reading a serious script. Such pranks probably began with the inception of broadcasting, and historically may be traceable to earlier forms of public performance.³⁸ Only two prank stories were collected from

³⁸See for example the notes by Sid Boyling and Kay Parkin in Bill McNeill and Morris Wolfe, *Signing On: The Birth of Radio in Canada*, Doubleday, Toronto, 1982, pp. 141, 151. Labs has a number of studio prank narratives, "Narrative and Talk," pp. 106 - 109.

Aubrey Mac. It is possible that less pranking was carried on at VONF/CBN than at other workplaces. But it is more likely that this kind of narrative tended not to be told by Aubrey Mac in the formal interview contexts of my fieldwork. It may be that narratives about pranks are a more esoteric kind of narrative which is told most easily to other broadcasters and avoided when speaking to outsiders for fear of tarnishing the reputation of the craft. Among the narratives available from Aubrey Mac's repertoire, the only prank stories are told about himself, rather than others. This is significant because in them he denigrates, not his profession, but himself.

So one day I went into the Boss's office looking for a stamp. And I opened a drawer and here was a German Euger. Mr. Galgay, he was allowed a gun during the War. Well, now you know me, now, unpredictable, impulsive. I took the gun. Went into the bathroom, pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. So I went into the newsroom and Melvin was there with the earphones on. He could type. Terrific typer. I'm all fingers. "Melvin. Your money or your life." He couldn't hear me. "Go 'way, Aubrey. Go 'way, boy. I'm, a, look here, I'm in a hurry, boy. Al Vardy's waiting for this news." "Do you hear me? Your money or your life." And I pulled the trigger. [PAUSE.] Click. [PAUSE.] [PH: Nothing happened.] Nothing happened. And when he turned around and saw the gun, he collapsed over, over all, he collapsed over the typewriter. The next round was a bullet. [PH: Oh no.] The next thing was a bullet. [PH: That's close.] Jesus, I wouldn't be here telling you this, I wouldn't be here reciting this if that, if, if I had pulled another one. Now what do you think of a fella'd do a thing like that? [C8948/83-236]

Aubrey's other prank story, an in-studio prank, follows.

Mr. Jennings. We were great friends. He used to come down here a lot and I could say anything to him. "Where'd you get that suit? Did you get that down to the Arcade, hey?" I could say that to Mr.

Morrow, too. Lots of people couldn't say that, but I had this way about me, I suppose. And I'll tell you how Mr. Jennings and I became good friends. Max Ferguson and I were great friends. Max used to do those skits. *Rawhide*. He'd do these skits from, he was fantastic. And he'd come down here once a year. And he always sent a telegram ahead that he wanted me to be his announcer. So he had a format, he had a format; the same thing. "Here's Max!", you know. "It's the Max Ferguson Show! Now here's Max!" That's written down there. So you don't deviate from that. But do you know what I did? "This is the Aubrey Mac Show." [LAUGHTER.] Gee. Jesus. "And there's this chap here named Max Ferguson who wants to have a few words." [LAUGHING.] Je-e-sus. Mr. Jennings sent for copies of, sent for a copy of the tape. Said they never heard anything like it. Now I'm going to qualify my statement, I'm going to tell you the truth: I talked it over with the producer. [PH: Beforehand.] Yeah. [LAUGHTER.] Mr. Jennings never heard anything like it. And we became great friends. [C6948/83-236]

Note that the first of these prank stories does not involve an on-air situation and that the second had been cleared with the producer, first. Neither is of the kind we might expect in the workplace of the radio studio, which might test the abilities of an announcer in an on-air situation. Aubrey Mac told many anecdotes about getting into trouble at his workplace, but none of these compromised his reputation as a radio announcer. In fact, one of these was caused by his professionalism: he selflessly but unthinkingly took on an emergency announcing task.³⁹ The two narratives here represent pranks which are either off-air or "officialised" and therefore not professionally suspect.

The fifth category of narrative is that of heroes and characters. For Aubrey Mac the main "character" in his stories was himself. In keeping with this

³⁹ "Bacon and eggs", above, p. 28.

kind of occupational narrative, many of Aubrey's stories about himself stressed his own unpredictable nature. The narrative about the gun and Melvin Rowe, quoted earlier, exemplifies this.

In addition, he told stories about what may be called heroes, or at least highly respected persons who have proven to be proficient in the broadcasting profession. For Aubrey this type of content served not only as a matter for narration (the topic of a story), but also as a means of describing someone in the profession. Often this descriptive technique is used to lead into another expressive unit. This short description of a fellow announcer serves to introduce an anecdote about "ad-lib scripts."

Ted Withers is very, very, very glib. He, he's, he's great to speak extemporaneously, you know. [PH: I guess that's one of the things you need in sports announcing.] Yeah, well I was never an extemporaneous speaker. But Ted. Ted is exceptional, I must say. He's never lost for a word. Matter of fact you can't shut him up. [LAUGHS.] [PH: Well, what would you do at a game, then, when you were doing live announcing? That must have been hard for you, was it?] Well, boy, I, eh, we, the favourite saying around CBC was, "Have you got your ad-lib script ready?" [LAUGHS.] You'd have reams and reams and reams of scripts going down to the Regatta every year. You'd have it all written out, you know. [C6248/83-236]

Aubrey spoke about Harry Brown with similar adulation.

Well, Harry's another Don Jamieson. I mean he'd talk whether he knows anything or not. I'm not like that: I got to prepare something. If I got to do something Wednesday, I'd be from now till Wednesday thinking about that. . . . Harry Brown, my God, if he was going to the Regatta, he probably wouldn't think about it till the last minute. [C6248/83-236]

Comments of praise about announcer-heroes make direct reference to their admirable work techniques. The next heroic narrative also focusses on such skills. Not only should an announcer be able to speak well extemporaneously, but he must also be able to react quickly and competently to all problems.

And there was Bob MacLeod who played the organ and played the piano and he was an announcer. And I remember on one occasion they had a programme during the War, what was it called? It was announced by a Captain of the Canadian Forces, and the famous piano player, ah, what was his name? Of course I know it: Ian Cowan. Ian Cowan was playing the piano this night. Now Bob MacLeod and Ian Cowan were very, very close, very good friends. Both of them were expert piano players. And Ian was fantastic. . . . He had a milk farm, like the Kelseys. [PH: Out on Cowan Avenue then?] Oh Cowan Avenue was called after the Cowan family. He had a milk farm up on Cowan Avenue. And he was a famous piano player and he was playing this night on this programme. He played every week for this programme. Anyway, Bob MacLeod was reading the *Gerald S. Doyle Bulletin* across the way in another studio. And Ian collapsed on the piano. Bob MacLeod said, "Good evening," to the people, rushed over, sat down and continued the programme that Ian was doing. And no one knew that Ian had died. Fell over the keys and died that night. [PH: Right there on the air.] And the programme was not interrupted. Bob MacLeod kept it going. I remember that dramatic event. [C6948/83-236]⁴⁰

Similarly the following heroic narrative emphasizes the announcer's requisite quick and competent reactions in the face of emergency.

⁴⁰This programme series was called *Stand By For Music*. The following week half of the thirty-minute programme was devoted to a memorial to Ian Cowan. The second half reverted to its usual format of studio musicians and singers performing popular songs. A recording of this memorial programme was retained by VONF and is contained in the collection of soft-cut discs, MUNFLA CBC disc 912a (=PAC tape 157)/79-007.

Now Bob Furlong was the Chief Censor. Now we all had to submit our scripts to him before we went on the air during the War. And Joey Smallwood went in one day [with his *Barrelman* script] and he crossed off four pages of his script. But Joey was undaunted: he went to the microphone and he spoke extemporaneously for about seven minutes. Tremendous mind. Tremendous extemporaneous speaker. [C6948/83-236]⁴¹

Thus, concerns with occupational technique and skill are reflected in Aubrey Mac's hero stories. In the following personal experience narrative and commentary, however, Aubrey directly discusses technique--his conquering the problem of being a speaker of a local dialect in a job which required the use of a prestige dialect.⁴²

[PH: Did you try to play down your Newfoundland accent?] I certainly did! [PH: Is that right?] I say, yessir. [PH: How did you do that?] By constant practise. And trying to, to, to round out the consonants and the vowels and the, so many words, you know, that we fell into the trap, growing up and going to school, some of the words were flat, like "water" and o-u-t: [wa-t̪̥] and [ʔəʊt̪̥] and that kind of thing. And boy, I used to, Bob Cole had the same kind of trouble. Boy he practised hard, he did. [PH: It's funny, isn't it, because today you got people like Mike Critch, or even like,] Well, Mike Critch, yeah. Yeah, but that's good, that, that suits Mike. I like Mike. [PH: So do I. It sounds good.] I like Mike because he's himself. And he's natural.

⁴¹Dick O'Brien, who first went to work at MONF in 1943, and who later became assistant manager of the station, and a vice-president of the CBC, remembers the occasion slightly differently. In a talk before a Conference on the Commission of Government Era, Queen's College, St. John's, 30 April 1986, O'Brien said that in a pique Furlong had destroyed Smallwood's entire script. Smallwood was not to be undone. He then spoke for his entire fifteen minutes extemporaneously. He began with a statement that there were some people in the world who could talk for a short time about nothing. After stating his theme, he developed it "by talking about nothing at all" through his allotted time and was able to wrap it up exactly as his time ran out.

⁴²In brackets I have transcribed in standard phonetic script certain words the pronunciation of which Aubrey called attention to.

[PH: But isn't it funny that people,] Yes isn't it funny that people want to get away from that? I wouldn't want to be able, I wouldn't want to talk like that. You know, when I hear myself, when I hear a word that's flat, I write it down. I try not to, not to say it flat the next time. [PH: Is that right. So do you practise?] Yeah. Yeah. [PH: So it you hear yourself say [æə t], you'll try to eh, pick it up and say [a ə t, a ə t]. That kind of thing?] Yesss. I'd go up in the hills, go in the bathroom, take, take a script and, try to round out my words, try to enunciate, articulate, say it over and over and over. [PH: When you started reading the sports news, first, would you ask people to point things out to you?] No. [PH: So you'd do all this by yourself?] No, well, well, I--. Oh people have pointed things out to me and stopped me on the street and told me, you know, and told me, "You're not pronouncing that word correctly." And neither was I. Lots of words I wasn't pronouncing right. People were helpful. Yeah. Constructive criticism. Yeah. And I wrote phonetics, you know, for instance, like Wally Millman, you know he made a, he made a mistake when he did the sports for CJON. But he was talking about the Grand Prix. P-R-I-X? And he said, the "Grand pricks." [PH: Oh no.] Yeah, well, I wouldn't take a chance on that. I'd put down "Grand" and bracket it with "P-R-E-E." Badger's Q-U-A-Y. I've gone on the air and said "Badger's Kway." I'd cross it out and put K-U-I. [PH: So you'd always read your script first.] Same with, with, abhh. musical selections, you know, Scheherazade, and all those operatic titles that are not very easy to say. And some of them you don't pronounce the way they are spelled. Many, many words are not pronounced the way they're spelled. So you had to be careful, boy, or you'd get tripped up. [C6248/83-236]

The sixth and final category of Aubrey Mac's narratives is that of memories of great events, or meetings with well-known persons. This particular kind of narrative is one which Aubrey used as well in his radio programme, *Nice and Easy*. On one programme he related the story of his meeting the film actress Joan Blondell who travelled to Newfoundland with the USO to perform at the American bases.⁴³ On another programme he spoke of phoning "my friend, Bill Stern" about the Joe Louis-Max Schmelling fight.

⁴³ See p. 54, below.

Hallo everybody everywhere. I was in the control room the morning after Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmelling in the first round. I was in the control room here at the CBC. Well, that was 1938. It was over in one hundred and twenty-four seconds. Most of the seventy thousand friends and fans, some of whom paid as much as a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a single seat, was as amazed as the challenger. Old friends will recall that Schmelling was fouled, paralysed by a thunderous kidney punch, so I phoned my friend Bill Stern from the Control Room, who took part in that historic broadcast. And I confronted him with my opinion that Schmelling was fouled. Bill nearly came through the phone. "He was not fouled," he shouted. "It was a fair blow. And it reverberated all over Yankee Stadium." Well you don't argue with a fella like Bill Stern but all I know is that Schmelling didn't get a chance to put up his dukes. Now, around the Bronx, and New York City, Yankee Stadium in those days, they were singing and humming, "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home." (*Nice and Easy*, 19 November 1983, C7414/85-040.)

These stories were not meant to be amusing as were many of the other stories and

jokes he told on radio. Instead they were meant to chronicle the times which

Aubrey had lived through and seen, and to put the past in sober reflection. By

doing this, the stories put Aubrey in that same reflective light. Reflection was a

recurrent theme in his narratives, both on radio and in personal interviews.

Perhaps it was something which went deeper than simply a public persona,

something which stemmed from Aubrey's real concerns about his own life. The

Schmelling story has a further item of interest: it begins with "Hallo everybody

everywhere." This is an implicit reference to Aubrey's favourite radio announcer,

Lowell Thomas, who opened all his commentary programmes with a similar

phrase, "Good evening everybody everywhere."⁴⁴ Aubrey normally opened each

⁴⁴See Aubrey Mac's discussion of Lowell Thomas, C6248/83-236.

Nice and Easy programme with that line. This particular story, however, is from the middle of a programme, so the intent is not simply to use it as his formula. Rather it is to call attention to such great announcers as Thomas.

Famous persons did not have to be foreigners. The following is a section from a longer narrative which chronicled the careers of Geoff Stirling and Don Jamieson during the late 1940s and through the 1950s.

Don and Geoff soon had their sights set on television. From radio to television. There was no television here then. And the CBC Board of Governors came to Newfoundland under the chairmanship of Mr. Donovan, Ahh, David Donovan. And they held a big meeting in the Newfoundland Hotel. The Church was represented. The State was represented. And they debated the pros and cons of who should be given the license for television: CBC or Jamieson and Stirling. Ron Pumphrey, I remember, got up and gave an impassioned speech on behalf of Don and Geoff. But the vote went against Geoff and Don. And I felt a bit sad about it, because I was very close to Don and Geoff. And I went over to them to sympathise with Geoff, and Geoff said, "Son of a gun. CBC monopoly!" But he didn't give up. I remember I was down getting the news ready one morning, down to Radio, on Duckworth Street. And I went to the CBC, or to the Canadian Press, and I hauled off this item. I was staggered. I couldn't believe what I was reading. "The license for television given to Don Jamieson and Geoff Stirling." Well, it's common knowledge that Premier Smallwood and Mr. Pickerskill who was then the Minister of Transport and who was responsible for licenses reversed the decision of the CBC and gave Don and Geoff the license to go ahead with television. It was a bonanza for these two young men. For ten years they had the monopoly for television. And they made something like ten to fifteen million dollars. That was in 1955 and to this day Don doesn't like to admit and still won't admit that Joey Smallwood gave him the license for television. [C6948/83-236]

Here we see Aubrey not as an actor but rather as an observer, a privy observer, of one of the most important events in the history of his own occupation

in Newfoundland. The event is also a pivotal one in the careers of two men who went on to become famous, at least regionally. The implication is that Aubrey was there at the momentous occasion, and was in some sense equal to the great men whose lives were shaped by the event.

It was already mentioned that some of the narratives in the interview from which the last quoted excerpt was taken were prompted by Aubrey's prepared "ad-lib script." This was one of these. His radio programme was completely scripted and when he told this kind of story on his show, there was invariably a moral lesson to be drawn from the story. The following story is about his meeting the film star Joan Blondell, and the implicit lesson is that despite appearances the great and famous can be petty, spiteful people.

Hero worship can grip one like a vise. A starry-eyed Newfoundlander was invited to meet Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and movie queen Joan Blondell. And now that was during the war years. Joan was the wife of Dick Powell at the time. They were guests of U. S. officials at the Argentia Base. Came the big moment. This timid Newfoundlander arrived at the USO building, went backstage. Several girls were beautifying themselves. One was sipping coffee from a mug without a handle, at the same time taking big puffs from a cigarette. When she said she was Joan Blondell, the boy was aghast, stricken with disbelief. She didn't look like the Joan Blondell of the silver screen. Far away from the land of make-believe, this timid lad saw her as she really was. Here was no ravishing beauty, and when he told her she looked tired and should go home, she unleashed a stream of invective on him. But she wasn't really crude or rude because the boy found out later that she was just tired, that she was a real lady. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., in the meantime, was a suave, charming man, then a Commander, attached to the S. S. *Mississippi*. By this time, you probably guessed that I was the moon-struck kid in the story. But my trip ended in "Heartaches." [Song by that name followed.] [Nice and Easy, 12 November 1983, CBN radio, MUNFLA tape C7412/85-040]

Richard Dorson has pointed out in his study of industrial workers' narratives in northern Indiana that the

stories fall into the categories of personal experience narratives and repeated anecdotes. Only rarely does a given narrative prove to be apocryphal, of long antiquity and wide dispersion. . . .⁴⁵

Aubrey Mac's stories are similar. For the most part they rest squarely on the factual base of his own life. Only rarely do they represent versions of widely known and folkloristically annotated motifs or tales. An example of such a story is that about Harry Brown as a children's programme announcer. Nonetheless narrations which are unique (or nearly so) are of interest to folklorists on the basis not of content, but rather of context and performance.

The personae one projects are directly related to role-playing and personality, role being the personal side of social context. Accordingly, this survey of the six kinds of narratives used by a retired radio announcer, packaged by him for the projection of particular images in certain contexts, has cited some of the ways in which he varied his use of narrative. By this variation he was able to suit the personae which he manipulated in other roles and situations.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Dorson, *Land of the Millrats* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1981), p. 108.

Chapter 3

Message Programmes

This chapter examines "message programmes", a type of programme which has been very popular both with radio stations and their audiences in Newfoundland in the past fifty years. Perhaps the most important of these programmes was the *Gerald S. Doyle Bulletin* and it is discussed in some detail. The programmes are viewed in the light of what is known about the role of communication in the Newfoundland outport, and in particular the role of gossip. The two phenomena share aspects and something can be learned by such an approach. Message programmes have taken a primary place in the oral folk history of broadcasting in Newfoundland, not only from the esoteric point of view of broadcasters, but also from the exoteric point of view of listeners. In a manner similar to the collection and telling of jokes, excerpts from remembered message programmes are passed on for enlightenment and entertainment.

One of the aspects of Newfoundland outport life which has been examined by contemporary students of Newfoundland culture is the role of communication. In particular gossip has been examined as a force in the reproduction of social structures, fashions and mores. By making the normative requirements of community life more explicit, gossip is said to reinforce and reproduce these requirements of society.

Max Gluckman laid out much of the territory for students of gossip in 1963.¹ He pointed out that in many cultures, and certainly in our own, gossip is something that people engage in continually. Gossip and its cousin, scandal, function in the maintenance of "the unity, morals and values of social groups." They also work to enable groups "to control the competing cliques and aspiring individuals of which all natural groups are composed. And finally, they make possible the selection of leaders without embarrassment."²

James Faris suggests that in Cat Harbour the difference between gossip and news is more one of context than of content.³ This is to say that if a matter is discussed in a public context, in which men are more likely than women to be vocal, then it is "news." If the matter is discussed in a private context, in which women tend to be more vocal, then it is "gossip". With regard to the content, or the information thus transmitted, there seemed to Faris to be no significant difference between the two. He saw that news could be more or less valuable depending on its freshness, strangeness and cultural congruency. Television, he suggests, was less than a success in Cat Harbour because it presented "news" which was not particularly relevant to the community and to its world view. He does not discuss the role of radio programmes in the community. It would have

¹Max Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal," *Cultural Anthropology*, 4: 3 (June 1963), 307 - 316.

²*Ibid.*, p. 308.

³James Faris, "The Dynamics of Verbal Exchange: A Newfoundland example," *Anthropologica*, 8:1 (1966), 238 (hereafter cited as "Dynamics"); also *Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement* (St. John's: ISER, M.U.N., 1973), hereafter cited as *Cat Harbour*, p. 144.

been fruitful in this light for him to discuss the value placed on the news from such programmes as the *Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin*. Such programmes were known for being filled with the kinds of messages which seemed to have relevance in the daily lives of many Newfoundlanders.

Faris notes that an able teller of valuable news was held in high esteem in Cat Harbour. Esteem accrued with increasing "freshness" and "strangeness," although by means of the "cuffer" a story might be recirculated long after its freshness had faded. In producing a cuffer the teller would exaggerate, or otherwise change the story in acceptable ways, accruing a kind of esteem similar to that of the bringer of news. Faris describes a process by which men of the community would meet at least daily at a central shop in the community where outside news was known first to appear. Then they would travel back to their own part of the village and report the news in more local groupings at neighbourhood shops. News would quickly pass through the community via the locations in the community everyone was certain to have at least indirect contact with - the shops.

Peter Narváez has looked at the role of gossip in the Newfoundland mining town of Buchans during a long and bitter strike against the company which operated the mine. He shows the relationships between social and economic realities and the gossip, making the point that the two-valued class consciousness of Buchans (i.e., the company v. the workers) is reinforced and

reproduced through such cultural means as gossip.⁴

Robert Paine has also looked at the role of gossip in community life although not specifically with reference to Newfoundland outports.⁵ He sees gossip as purposive behaviour, based in the needs and desires of the individual, not in the structural needs of the community as a whole. The gossip is involved in "information management," a species of "impression management."⁶ Gossip, Paine says, is a tool, and not a product, of communication; it is a device used by individuals.

Louis J. Chiaramonte in his study of "Deep Harbour" does not look at the role of gossip but does paint a picture of a community within a great network of communication. He explains the various ways in which the "isolated" community gets the news which it considers important: travel to and from nearby communities (for work, recreation and courtship); the regular visits of the fish-collecting "smack" and that of the coastal boat; correspondence; and radio. He describes the widespread daily attendance to a radio programme of messages by which, for example, a wife leaving hospital in St. John's might let her husband

⁴Peter Narváez, "The Protest Songs of a Labor Union on Strike against an American Corporation in a Newfoundland Company Town: A Folkloristic Analysis with Special Reference to Oral Folk History," unpublished PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1986, pp. 91 - 118.

⁵Robert Paine, "What is Gossip About? An Alternative Hypothesis", *Man*, 2 (1967), 278 - 285.

⁶This is the term of Erving Goffman, developed in *The Presentation Of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

know exactly what day she will arrive home.⁷

Except for Chiaramonte, none of these writers has discussed the role of the popular media in transmitting, amplifying and introducing communications (information) into the community. Although the media have not generally been neglected by students of culture, students of traditional culture have shied away from analysis of the role of the media as if traditional culture were somehow isolated from popular culture and the media. It is unlikely that there has been a time in the past couple of centuries when folk cultures have been in isolation from some form of popular culture.⁸ Culture in all its forms is organic, feeding on other cultural forms, constantly producing new forms. Despite revivalist attitudes, this is as true for traditional outport culture in Newfoundland as for modern elite culture in which eclecticism is admired and encouraged.

Antecedents of message programmes

During the centuries of Newfoundland settlement by Europeans there have been many forms of popular culture evident in the folk-cultures of the outports. In the eighteenth and through the nineteenth centuries, and in fact well into the twentieth century, broadside ballads were a popular form of entertainment, serving to expand the repertoires of local singers and the horizons

⁷ Louis J. Chiaramonte, *Craftsman-Client Contracts: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Community*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Study #10, hereafter cited as *Contracts* (St. John's: ISER, M.U.N., 1970), p. 8. See below, p. 94.

⁸ See for example, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978),

of their audiences. These broadsides circulated the "hit songs" of the day and were printed for international, regional and local distributions, much as radio is distributed today. They also served as a kind of newspaper for many people for whom for one reason or another newspapers were inaccessible. New songs brought news in a very similar way to newspapers, or radio. Paul Mercer, like D.K. Wilgus before him, suggests that sound recordings are the "modern broadside." This ignores the role of the broadside as a purveyor of news and views; in this role it was radio which was the successor of the broadside.⁹

In the mid-nineteenth century, Newfoundland became one of the nodes in the trans-Atlantic chain of communication. When cables were laid across the Atlantic in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Newfoundland was the natural American terminus. As a result news often was heard along the telegraph wires or printed in the newspapers of Newfoundland before it reached the streets

⁹On the broadside in general, see Leslie Shepard, *The Broadside Ballad* (Hatboro, Pa.: Legacy, 1978). Mercer's discussion of the role of printed songs in Newfoundland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to be found in his thesis, H. Paul Mercer, "A Bio-Bibliography of Newfoundland Songs in Printed Sources," (St. John's: Memorial University, 1978). His comment on "modern broadsides" is p. 36. D. K. Wilgus's comment on the same is *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1959), pp. 256 - 259. See Anne Cohen, *Poor Pearl, Poor Girl: The Murdered-girl Stereotype in Ballad and Newspapers* (Austin: U Texas P, Austin, 1973), for a discussion of the relationships between popular song and the news media in the late nineteenth century.

of London or New York.¹⁰ Newfoundlanders, instead of feeling isolated from the rest of the modern world, felt very much a part of it.

Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, the Newfoundland Government began to realise the importance of a regular diet of news to its citizens and began a daily "Public Despatch." This was compiled in St John's from wire reports, local newspapers and government notices and distributed through the Government's Post Offices and telegraph system.¹¹

The Public Despatch was the only news source for many outports and as a result was the object of controversy. Riots in several Newfoundland communities during the summer of 1932 were not mentioned in the Despatch and this led the editor of the *Fishermen's Advocate* to complain of censorship. In response, a reader of the *Evening Telegram* countered the attack on the Despatch with the observation that the compiler of the government news service showed "both wisdom and good judgement" in ignoring the riots.

¹⁰See for example: Melvin Rowe, "In Quest of Foreign News", address to Kiwanis Club of St. John's, 20 April 1976 (CNS typescript). I am grateful to Melvin Rowe for pointing out to me the memoirs of Rev. C. Ernest Smith who in 1882 was posted to Heart's Content, Trinity Bay, the North America terminus of the trans-Atlantic cable. Instead of being cut off from news of the rest of the world, Smith found, much to his surprise, that he was presented daily with a written synopsis of the day's news from both sides of the Atlantic: *Under the Northern Cross, or Parochial Memories* (Milwaukee: Morehouse, [1924]), pp. 334 ff. The growth of the telegraph in Newfoundland is detailed in J. T. Meaney, "Communication in Newfoundland," in J. R. Smallwood, ed. *The Book of Newfoundland*, I (St John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), pp. 328 - 338.

¹¹Rowe ("In Quest of") suggests this began in 1917. However, documents in the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) clearly show that the "Despatch" was in full operation, even to the extent of being sent by wireless to the Labrador fishermen by 1912: PANL G2/5.C.6.

I fail to see what good purpose can be served by wasting the time of the army of operators right throughout the country in receiving and copying this trash, feeding only the morbid appetites of sensation mongers and the loafer, and serving the purpose of supplying material for those who waste their time around the local Postal Telegraph Office, instead of employing the cool of the evenings in weeding their gardens or clearing land or catching fish.¹²

The writer also argued that the Despatch might prove worthwhile in the future if it taught Newfoundlanders useful knowledge such as how to spray one's cabbages and other such information "that will help us earn our livelihood, instead of exciting our passions."¹³ Despite the correspondent's negative attitude to the "loafers" at the post offices, we get a clear picture of the value of the Despatch to outpost Newfoundland.

The Public Despatch was a great success and the government continued to produce it until the mid-1930s when it was probably judged that radios in the outposts were serving the same purpose more efficiently. The Newfoundland telegraph stations were part of the postal system and from an early date postmasters and postmistresses were required to know how to send and receive Morse Code.¹⁴ Part of the postmasters' job was to transcribe the Despatch as it

¹²Malcolm Pelley, "The Service of the Public Despatch," *Evening Telegram*, 15 August 1932, p. 10.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴See for example the biography of Miss Florence Miller of Topsail who learned code from her father at age six or seven, near the turn of the century, and who took over his job as postmaster after he retired, MUNFLA ms 80-258, collector, J. M. Whelan.

came in each day and then to post it in a public part of the post office for all to read. This ritual of reading the news, or of having it read, became an important part of the daily round of activities in many, perhaps all, Newfoundland outposts:

... and all the public news would be wrote down in the Office in Haystack and you'd even walk [from Spencer's Cove where the informant lived] to Haystack to read the [news], especially when there was anything worthwhile going ahead, you'd walk to Haystack and read the news. And then when you'd come back of course you'd spread the news to everyone. If it was important.¹⁵

This aspect of daily community life led to anecdotes and legends about the ritual. For example, the following comment notes the interaction of local gossip and the ritual of reading the Despatch.

Old Charlie Reid used to live here [in Norris Point]. He was with the CNT telegraph. He used to write down all the daily news and no one could read it only hisself and old Jenkins. [That was] when the War was on.¹⁶

Although the purpose of this practice of daily visits to the post office was to find out what was going on in the rest of the world, the informative function was supplemented by a purely social function. It is often pointed out that the post office became a place for the men to gather and talk.

My father had a general store [in British Harbour, Trinity Bay] and also ran the post office and the telegraph office. . . . For the people who got telegraph messages either my father would deliver them or we

¹⁵ MUNFLA tape C5605/80-062, collector, Bonny P. Broydell. Spencer's Cove and Haystack are adjacent communities on Long Island, Placentia Bay.

¹⁶ MUNFLA ms 80-233, collector, James Forward, pp. 21-22.

[children] would do it. The general news and the war news and the weather were written in the book and put out in the lobby of the post office. The people could drop in anytime and read the news. The men would yarn down there almost every day, especially on wet day.¹⁷

By the 1950s the Public Despatch had ceased. Even so, it was noted that the men of Bonavista still gathered at the post office. The board once used to post the daily Despatch was still used by the community in 1979 to give notice of funerals and garden parties and for other important announcements.¹⁸

It is clear then, that news has served as a focus for social gathering in Newfoundland for quite some time, with evidence going back over a century, since the introduction of telegraphy. When news arrived by wire at the central place in the community, the post office, a crowd would gather in order to read it. This is very similar to reports that in many communities a crowd would gather at the wharf when the coastal boat arrived in order that each person might see for himself what new things and people had arrived. Chiaramonte says, "If the coastal boat should happen to call at Deep Harbour on a Sunday when the men are not fishing, there might be as many as 100 people standing on the government wharf when she ties up."¹⁹ In a community of 340 persons, this was a substantial turnout. It is likely that more often than not news was being brought; rather

¹⁷MUNFLA ms 75-130, collector, M. F. Anderson, p. 15.

¹⁸MUNFLA ms 79-708, collector, M. LaFosse, p. 11. Other references to the social aspects of the Public Despatch are to be found in MUNFLA mss 70-21, p. 67; 72-22, p. 9; 73-76, p. 60; 80-052, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹Contracts, p. 7

than new people or things. In the outport a gathering occurred wherever news came into the community, regardless of the medium. This is true of all media of news: coastal boats, post offices or radios.

It is significant that when gender is specified in reports of news-related gatherings, most often men gather. Faris points out that it was said that men spread news around but that women *gossiped* and that this was because of the contexts in which these activities occurred.²⁰ Men were more likely to be vocal and interactive in public settings; women were more likely to be so in private settings. It was this, not the content, which distinguished the two commodities, gossip and news. In the Cat Harbour shops, as in the post offices and on the wharves, we find men gathering, collecting news in order to pass it on to their friends and families.

News as a commodity is valuable -- it not only brings attention and esteem, but it also is a form of power. This power is one aspect of gender relations in the Newfoundland outport. Men controlled "news," as Faris pointed out, simply by definition of the term. When the locus of news entry was a public, male-oriented place, then men continued to control the news. Later, the locus of news entry shifted from the public, government-sponsored post office, to the privacy of homes. This happened when radios appeared and owners were able to tune in stations and hear programmes of their choice. The commodity was less the property of men; women could turn on the radio when they pleased and

²⁰ "Dynamics," p. 238; *Cat Harbour* p. 144.

receive news directly. The commodity was then in hands of a wider section of the community.

This shift did not occur immediately. The context of receiving news from the Despatch was a public, communal one and by social convention a male one. When radios first appeared, they were scarce: only the well-to-do could afford them. People gathered in homes in order to share the experience of hearing the news, at first making public gatherings in private places. More radio sets in a community meant smaller and smaller groups listening together until the experience of radio became a non-public one.²¹ This process of a medium of communication initially spawning a public event and later being privatised is not peculiar to the electronic media. It has probably been true for other forms of media and technological innovation as well.

As noted above, the Despatch was very early transmitted by wireless to the Labrador Coast. The Newfoundland Government contracted the Canadian Marconi Company to provide a service, which originally was a seasonal one, to serve the Newfoundland fishermen and merchants who travelled to the Coast each summer. Within a couple of years, however, the service became a year-round one. During the First World War settlers on the Coast complained to the Government in St. John's that they were no longer being regularly informed of the course of

²¹ See Peter Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, The 'Barrelman': The Broadcaster as Folklorist," *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 5: 1-2 (1983), p. 69. See also Philip Hiscock, "The Mass Media in the Folk Culture of Newfoundland: A Survey of Materials in the MUN Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA)," *Culture and Tradition*, 8 (1984), 20-38.

the War.²² The Government then ordered the Marconi Company to continue the service through the winter months.

The Labrador "Marconi Stations," as they were often called, not only carried the daily news as issued by the Government but they also carried messages to and from the people on the Coast. In this way the stations were no different from Post Offices on the Island. The stations were further from the communities they served than post offices were, however, and the greater distance meant a different kind of relationship from that between the post offices and their communities on the Island. The following illustrates the role that the Marconi operator sometimes played in the community life of the Labrador fishermen, merchants and their families.

A friend of mine, you've heard of him, Joe Butler that started VOCM. Well, I was only a little fellow [during the First World War], he was the wireless operator in Makkovik [on the North Coast of Labrador]. We used to go to a place called Iron Bound Islands. We could go up on the hill behind our house with a pair of binoculars and see his antenna, his building where his wireless room was. Everytime there was a message for my Dad, he would put up a flag. And if we saw the flag up we would go over and get the message, in the boat. So everyday I'd be up looking for the flag because I wanted to get a boatride. You see, it was a great day for [my brother] Cliff and I when there was a message, when the flag went up. We'd both go over there and Joe Butler showed us the radio station he had over there. The big spark gaps going, boy it was fascinating. A motor generator. As a reward for his courtesy in putting up the flag my Dad used to bring him

²² Letter, William Swaffield, Hudson's Bay Company Post at Cartwright, to Colonial Secretary, 28 October 1914, PANL GN 2/5.6. This entire file deals with the Government's contacts with Canadian Marconi Company in the immediate pre-First World War years on the matter of the stations on the Labrador Coast.

a new pair of shoes every summer.²³

The Labrador stations eventually became known as the "message stations" and when Labrador residents began to acquire radios themselves, some of the stations would actually "broadcast" the local messages each day.²⁴ Ben-Dor noted in the early 1960s that

... for matters of expediency the resident of Makkovik must resort to the use of the radio or radio-telephone. The radio, operated by the [government] depot personnel, transmits messages in a telegram form three times daily. There is a nominal fee for services between the different stations [on the Coast]. Messages which are sent to points outside Northern Labrador pass through the Department of Transport at Hopedale to Goose Bay and other locations. The radios serve as the great grapevine of Northern Labrador. The messages can be heard on any ordinary radio with a shortwave band and it is not unusual to find a housewife planning her day to include the three scheduled transmissions.²⁵

²³ Oscar Hierlihy, personal interview, 11 October 1983, MUNFLA tape C6947/83-236. It was this early exposure to wireless which inspired a lifelong interest in radio and television for Mr. Hierlihy. On his career, see Geoff Meeker, "Oscar Hierlihy: Pioneer of the Airwaves," *The Newfoundland Herald*, 38:37 (10 September 1983), 16 - 19. Hierlihy's own autobiographical manuscript, consisting of photocopied photographs and commentary, has been deposited in MUNFLA as part of MUNFLA collection 83-236.

²⁴ The term "message station" is used frequently with reference to these facilities; for example, Edmund C. Osmond, *Call of the Labrador* (Port Colbourne, Ontario: Moss Press, 1973), p. 55.

²⁵ Shmuel Ben-Dor, *Makkovik: Eskimos and Settlers in a Labrador Community: A contrastive study in adaptation*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Study #4, ISER, MUN, St. John's, 1966, pp. 184-186. See MUNFLA ms 81-456, pp 13-14, for another example of this. Edmund C. Osmond's account of his being a Pentecostal pastor on the Labrador Coast in the early 1960s, *Call of the Labrador*, also makes this point: "In those days it was only to turn on your radio and all messages could be heard by everyone" (p.73).

Broadcasting

Radio was seen by many to be peculiarly apt in Newfoundland, a country of few roads and poor communications by water. In winter some communities were effectively cut off from most outside contacts for months. Former broadcaster J. R. Smallwood has suggested on a number of occasions that God allowed radio to be invented especially for Newfoundland.²⁶ Certainly radios quickly became common in Newfoundland during the 1930s and 1940s.²⁷ In 1935 the Newfoundland *Census Report* noted a total of 7,240 radio sets in the country. In the same year a British Broadcasting Corporation official, Sir Cecil Graves was told by local merchants that there were between six and ten thousand sets.²⁸ Four years later it was estimated by the Secretary for Posts and Telegraphs in the

²⁶Peter Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, The Barrelman: The Broadcaster as Folklorist," *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 5: 1-2 (1983), p. 62.

²⁷Radio histories tend to be written from the point of view of radio stations and not of radio audiences. There is no complete history of radio in Newfoundland, but see Ernest Ash, "The Story of Radio in Newfoundland," in J. R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, I (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), pp. 339 - 350. Authoritative histories exist for Canada, the United States and Britain. See, for Canada, Sandy Stewart's bibliography in his *From Coast to Coast: A Personal History of Radio in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985); for the United States, Nicholas Sharp's chapter, "Radio", in M. Thomas Inge, ed., *Handbook of American Popular Culture*, I (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978); and for Britain, Asa Briggs, *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, 3 vols. (London: Oxford U P, 1961-70). Recently an oral and pictorial history of broadcasting in British Columbia appeared: Dennis J. Duffy, *Imagine Please: Early Radio in British Columbia*, Sound Heritage No. 8 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1983). This work is a departure from the norm being from the points of view of both listeners and insiders in radio in its formative years. An interesting popular collection of excerpts from interviews with many Canadian broadcasters is Bill McNeill and Morris Wolfe, ed., *Signing On: The Story of Radio in Canada* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1982).

²⁸Sir Cecil Graves, *Report to Commissioner of Finance*, Public Record Office, XC/A/023065 Ref DO35/505 N118/36.

Newfoundland Government that there were about 12,050 sets. The Secretary noted, however, that his figures were based on sales of required but ill-policed radio receiving licenses. Whether or not these fees were collected, he said, depended more on the prevailing economic climate of the country than the actual number of radios being used.²⁹ The following year, in 1940, the American Consul General in St. John's, Harold B. Quarton, was informed by local merchants that there were 15,000 sets in use in Newfoundland.³⁰ We can see from these figures the rapid growth in radio ownership. In 1945 it was estimated that fifty percent of all homes outside St. John's had radio sets. In St. John's the estimated figure was sixty percent.³¹ Radio had clearly become, by the end of the Second World War, the major medium of mass communication in Newfoundland.

Except for the two church-owned radio stations in St. John's, broadcasting was supported in Newfoundland during its first decades entirely by commercial sponsorships. Even one of the church stations, that which became

²⁹G. D. Fraser, Secretary, Department of Posts and Telegraphs, memo, 5 April 1939; Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archive (CNS), Galgay Papers, Folder 43.

³⁰Harold B. Quarton, American Consul General, St. John's, *Market For Radio Receivers and Transmitting Equipment in Newfoundland*, April 1940, U.S. National Archives RG84, Post Files, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, v. 8, 1940. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Neary for sharing this document and the Graves Report with me.

³¹T. O. Garland and P. D'Arcy Hart, *Tuberculosis in Newfoundland, 1945* ([St. John's]: Trade Publishers, [1945]), p. 51. I am indebted to Janet McNaughton for this source.

VOAR, was for a time commercial.³² This commercial situation was similar to that in the United States where very quickly in the 1920s it was seen by enthusiasts and entrepreneurs that large profits could be realised in the new medium. In Newfoundland, the 1920s witnessed a constant but low-level activity by commercial, religious and amateur stations. The first successful commercial stations did not appear until the early 1930s when two competing stations, VONF (the Dominion Broadcasting Company) and VOGY (the Newfoundland Broadcasting Company) went on the air. Soon the two stations realised that the economic climate of the era did not allow two competitors to remain profitable. An agreement was reached between them to "amalgamate": in fact the Dominion Broadcasting Company bought out the other.³³

This new station remained quite profitable, having no major competitor in the country, but in 1934, the very first year of the Commission of Government, it was already being planned to start a national, publicly-owned system of

³²David Kennedy, ed., *As He has Led Us in the Past, -- 90 Years of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1985), p. 20. See also Franklin Knutson, "A survey of religious radio broadcasting in St. John's, Newfoundland," unpublished PhD dissertation, Michigan State University, 1969; particularly pp. 71 - 79.

³³The Dominion Broadcasting Company was owned by the Avalon Telephone Company; the Newfoundland Broadcasting Company was owned by two local radio enthusiasts. "Local station V.O.G.Y. opening," *Evening Telegram*, 12 September 1932; "Formal opening of new broadcasting station [VONF]," *Evening Telegram*, 14 November 1932. Ernest Ash, "The story of radio in Newfoundland," in J.R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, I, pp. 339 - 350.

broadcasting.³⁴ These plans took four years to begin the process of getting a national system of broadcasting in Newfoundland underway. In March 1939 the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN) began broadcasting through the studio facilities which it bought from the Dominion Broadcasting Company.³⁵

³⁴Diogenes, "Radio Control Planned," *Observer's Weekly* (St. John's), 17 November 1934, p. 16; letters in *Evening Telegram* signed "Magna Charta" and "Broadcast" respectively 20 November 1934 and 23 November 1934. See also the report by the Acting Commissioner for Finance, Sept. 1934, PANL/GN/38/S7-1-1/File-1. I am grateful to Jeff Webb for pointing this report out to me. It called for a government subsidy to be given the Telephone Company station in return for full programming control over the station. It was tentatively accepted by the Commission on 2 October 1934: PANL/GN/38/S-1-1-1. An amalgamation did follow but programming authority remained out of government hands until several years later.

³⁵Bob Lewis, "The Fantastic Communications Explosion," in J. R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, IV (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers 1967), p. 370.

Message programmes

The transmissions of the message stations on the Labrador Coast were not broadcast transmissions in the sense of being directed to a wide, anonymous audience. Instead they were meant for traffic to a specific point. For this reason they are known as point-to-point transmissions. Point-to-point transmissions contrast with broadcast transmissions which are usually meant to be picked up by as wide an audience as possible. Broadcasts differ from point-to-point transmissions in several ways but primarily in that they are public and that they are meant to inform and entertain. Point-to-point transmissions, on the other hand, are meant normally to be private and to pass on messages ("traffic") in a workaday fashion. Although they are usually on different frequencies, there is no significant technological difference between the two, and point-to-point transmissions in Labrador have been used by listeners as if they were broadcasts.

The message programme is a kind of broadcast programme which best points out the unique character of and uses to which radio has been put in Newfoundland. For several decades in Newfoundland and in Labrador, the programmes which were the most popular with radio audiences were of this type.³⁶ These message programmes were simple in structure: usually sponsored

³⁶ This is not to say, of course, that message programmes are unique to Newfoundland. For example, the domestic service of Radio RSA, in the Republic of South Africa has a weekly two-hour programme of messages to the conscripts in the National Service. This programme, *Forces' Favourites*, is aired every Sunday afternoon and is filled each week with personal messages from friends and relatives back at home to the boys "on the border." (CBC Radio, *Sunday Morning*, 26 January 1986.) Dick Halhed reports a similar, though somewhat less formally structured, service in the early 1940s at CBC radio station CFPR, in northern British Columbia. Dick Halhed, *Radio-The Remote Years* (Scarborough, Ont.: the author, 1981), pp. 14 - 16.

by a commercial concern, they contained messages from listeners to other listeners, performing an overt function which might be served by the telephone or the telegraph in a country better served by those media. Clearly, however, there are differences between, on the one hand, the telephone and telegraph, and, on the other hand, the message programmes. The differences are at both the level of content and the level of the medium. In the first place the medium of the telephone or telegraph is private and one-to-one, much like a private face-to-face conversation. From the points of view of both the receiver and the sender, the process is one-to-one. This means that the context, too, is private. On the other hand message programmes are public. Their content is transformed by this: the medium of the message programme publicises the message. This publicity, through the context of the message programme, transforms both the sender and the receiver into public persons, aspects of whose lives are now deemed worthy of public viewing. Concomitantly the sender is able to influence broadcasting output, albeit to a small extent, by sending messages. The ostensibly public medium is thereby privatised by the content while, at the same time, the ostensibly private communication is publicised by the medium.

Several functions were served by the message programme. Besides serving the obvious needs of the users of the programmes, those sending messages, and those of the listeners to whom the messages were explicitly directed, these programmes also filled a community need. These programmes were not only listened to by a large and faithful audience, but also became a part of

Newfoundland folklore, forming the core of many jokes and anecdotes which have been told and retold.

The Doyle News

The earliest, and without doubt the most successful, of the message programmes was the *News Bulletin* sponsored by Gerald S. Doyle Ltd. It began in 1932 as a daily sponsored programme on the radio station then known as VONF, owned, as already mentioned, by the Dominion Broadcasting Company.³⁷ In its earliest days the programme was compiled by the manager of the station, William F. Galgay. The reading was originally performed alternately by Galgay and Joseph L. Butler.³⁸ When Butler left VONF in order to start his own station VOCM in 1936, Galgay carried on for a time on his own. Later Galgay and Robert MacLeod read on alternate nights. Still later, during the late 1940s, the *Bulletin* was read by whichever announcer was on duty. Doyle preferred it to be read, however, by one announcer in particular.³⁹ The Doyle Company took over the compilation of the *Bulletin* very early and eventually contracted a reader who was no longer in the employ of the station. This reader was Evan Whiteway--the reader whom Doyle had preferred.⁴⁰

³⁷For an extensive bibliography on the *Doyle Bulletin*, see the bibliographical note, Appendix A, below.

³⁸See Galgay's own report on this in the CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 45, General Manager's Report, 18 March 1943, quoted below, p. 80.

³⁹Letter Doyle to BCN, 25 June 1948, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 3.

⁴⁰Personal interview with Evan Whiteway, 23 August 1984, MUNFLA tape C7426/85-040.

In 1938-39, VONF was sold by the Dominion Broadcasting Company to the newly founded national Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN), and the *Bulletin* went with it.⁴¹ With Confederation of Newfoundland and Canada in 1949, the BCN was taken over by the CBC, and the *Bulletin* was included in the package. During its lifetime on the CBC it was the only commercially-sponsored news programme aired by the Corporation.⁴² In 1965 the *Bulletin* was taken off the air after thirty-three years of active service to the residents of outlying communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was thought at that time that communications had improved in Newfoundland to the extent that the programme was no longer needed. Moreover, by then the Doyle Company was dissatisfied with the programme and questioned its utility to the Company.⁴³

The earliest shows were simply compilations of local news with public service messages mixed between the advertisements for the various products which Doyle's company distributed in Newfoundland. In the earliest extant logbook for radio station VONE, from the period August 1935 to October 1938, the programme is simply noted as "News Bulletin." Other programmes are listed

⁴¹ Correspondence, Gerald S. Doyle to G. D. Fraser, 12 December 1938; G. D. Fraser to Gerald S. Doyle, 15 December 1938, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 62.

⁴² Jean King, "Doyle News," *Atlantic Advocate*, 86 (June 1966), 80-82; rpt. in B. Morgan, H. Porter and G. Rubia, eds. *From This Place: A Selection of Writing by Women of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1977), pp. 38-43.

⁴³ "Tribute to Gerald S. Doyle," *Focus*, CBN Radio, 21 December 1971, MUNFLA tape 79-007/CBC39.

by their sponsors' names and only the *Bulletin* is so listed.⁴⁴ It is not clear whether this is because Doyle's name was not yet an integral part of the show's name or because already the programme had become so well-known that the station personnel felt it unnecessary to use the full name in the logbook. Soon after the beginning of the programme Doyle began to accept, and then solicit, collect telegrams from listeners who wanted to send messages to friends or relatives in places which were not easily reached by more conventional media. This active role brought the sponsor's name to the fore of the show and it was most often known by the shortened forms of the name, *The Doyle Bulletin* and *The Doyle News*. This also involved spending more money on the programme than simple sponsorship would normally entail. Doyle not only paid for airtime for the programme and for the collect wires which he accepted, but he also paid the salaries of the compiler and, for a time, the reader.

Although it is not known exactly what the *Bulletin* cost the Doyle Company during its years of operation, several years after taking the *Bulletin* off the air, Doyle's widow, Mary Doyle, told the CBC that at the end it cost \$50,000 per year. She thought that this was far too much for the value the Company got from the show and that a simple, and "very quick decision" was made to end it.⁴⁵

⁴⁴VONF Logbook, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 128.

⁴⁵"Tribute to Gerald S. Doyle," *Focus*, CPN Radio, 21 December 1971, MUNFLA tape 79-007/CBC39.

The use of the *Bulletin* for personal messages was not something the Newfoundland Department of Posts and Telegraphs looked on lightly. It meant that the Telegraph's monopoly was being cut into. At least twice the Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs complained to the BCN that the *Bulletin* was carrying messages which should by rights be going through the telegraph system. Only when the messages were actually urgent or directed to persons in places not served by wire should the *Bulletin* be used, said the Secretary.⁴⁶ It appears, however, that these complaints were ignored by both the management of the station and the Doyle company. Clearly the interests of programming and pleasing the audience came before the demands of another arm of the government. The Broadcasting Corporation was not always so clearly responsive to the needs of its audience. In late April of 1939 the President of the Fishermen's Protective Union, and a former Minister of Labour in Responsible Government days, Kenneth Brown made a scathing speech over VOCM, the private station, condemning the BCN for its dictatorial methods of muzzling free speech in the country by disallowing any political speeches on its station.⁴⁷

Doyle took a close personal interest in the programme on a daily basis. When he received reports from listeners, that they were having difficulties

⁴⁶ See letters from the Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs to W. F. Galgay, 23 March 1943, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 112; and to Gerald S. Doyle and W. F. Galgay, 20 January 1944, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 105.

⁴⁷ Although the BCN did not allow Mr Brown to speak on their station, Galgay had the speech recorded off the air. This recording is MUNFLA CBC disc 210B (=PAC tape 137/79-007).

receiving the *Bulletin*, he wrote the station manager giving as many details as possible.⁴⁸ Whenever the programme was disrupted or otherwise marred, Doyle was quick to complain to the Board of Governors of the BCN. This led, at times, to a discordant relationship between the station and the sponsor. In early 1943 the station's transmitter went off the air due to a power failure. Although there was a backup transmitter at the studio, this failed too. Doyle promptly complained that not only had his show not been aired, but the station personnel had not had the courtesy to phone him and notify him of the failure, as had been agreed. Later, Galgay wrote a report on the history of the *Bulletin* and the difficulties station personnel had with it.

It so happens that what is now known as the Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin was started by me more than eleven years ago and for a number of years I not only read the News but compiled it. . . . The Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin is the subject of more attention than any other program on the air. It requires a great deal of re-editing and, entirely apart from the English, which is generally atrocious, and which would be a disgrace to the station if broadcast as written, on many occasions the compilation is such that the entire Staff has been unable to make any sense of particular items.

Factual inaccuracies are numerous and many items involving persons and institutions are written in such a manner as to leave several constructions open to the listener with the possibility of interpretations which border on the libellous.

The News oftentimes does not reach the Studio until 6.45 or 7.00 P.M., a time when the announcers are most busy, and it is difficult enough to try and re-write part of it without having to call Mr. Doyle for an opinion.

⁴⁸See for example Doyle's letter complaining about interference from a Prince Edward Island station being picked up in the Fogo area, G. S. Doyle to Broadcasting Corporation, 15 January 1945, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 45.

To be entirely frank-there have been evenings when the Bulletin has been so badly compiled that the Announcer has given up in despair and has read the News just as it was. It is frequently with extreme reluctance that the Announcers have read the Bulletin as they feel that its construction was such as to reflect credit neither on themselves nor on the Station.

It should also be mentioned that Mr. Doyle is very touchy on the subject of the News and, whenever I have brought-up the matter of improving the compilation, he has merely given me an argument on the subject and the same old situation has continued to obtain.⁴⁹

A number of points raised by Galgay's report need explication and emphasis. It is clear from this report that Galgay was quite angered by Doyle's intervention and believed there were things wrong with the *Bulletin* which were beyond his control. His authority as General Manager of the BCN was being called into question by the programme and by Doyle himself. It is very revealing to read Galgay's comments in light of the fact of the *Bulletin's* huge success during its time, and, in the decades since its end, its reputation of being the most important and representative programme from a "Golden Era" of broadcasting in Newfoundland.⁵⁰

In order to appreciate Galgay's comments, and the implications of them, it is useful first to refer to the literature on "levels of culture." For many years cultural critics and other scholars have wrestled with the ideas of high-brow culture and low-brow culture or varieties of these terms. Writers have found

⁴⁹ General Manager's Report, 18 March 1943, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 45.

⁵⁰ See "End of Bulletin Marked New Age," in *Golden Age of CBN St. John's 640, 1932 - 1982*, supplement to the *Evening Telegram*, 20 October 1982, p. 5A.

most useful a tri-partite scheme and there are at least a few sets of labels for these. Lynes made popular the term "middle-brow" for an intermediate group of tastes between what we normally think of as being high-brow (classical music, "serious" art, *haute couture* fashion and so on) and low-brow (more or less equivalent, for Lynes, to folk culture).⁵¹

Despite the original class-based identification of these terms many later writers used them with little or no explicit class connotation.⁵² Others have found it useful to use terms which have somewhat different connotative weight. The most widely used, and perhaps the most useful of these schema divides the cultural world up into folk, popular and elite (or "high"). Earlier usages of this schema tended to view it as a vertical continuum. A recent article by Terry Goldie develops the idea of a continuum between popular culture and folklore, borrowed from Peter Narváez.⁵³ Ray Browne developed what he calls the "lens of culture" in which folk and high culture are at the ends of an ellipse with

⁵¹ R. Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow and Middlebrow," in *The Tastemakers* (New York: Harper, 1954; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 310 - 333.

⁵² Most recently cultural analysts have taken explicit-class-based views deriving in part from the Frankfurt School. See for example, Raymond Williams *Culture* (London: Fontana), 1981. Only in small measure has this influence been felt in North American folkloristics, but the debates continue.

⁵³ Terry Goldie, "Folklore, Popular Culture and Individuation in *Surfacing* and *The Diviners*," *Canadian Literature*, 104 (Spring 1985), 95 - 108. Peter Narváez, "Country Music in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland," *Journal of Country Music*, 7:2 (1978), 93 - 101.

popular culture taking up the majority of the ellipse itself.⁵⁴ The intent of this diagrammatic view of culture is to show the pervasiveness of popular culture and as well the similarities which folk culture and elite culture have with each other.

He also goes somewhat further in that at the core of the ellipse he inserts a circle of mass-culture. "Mass culture" is the somewhat disparaging term which cultural critics come to refer to culture which is broadcast in the general sense to an anonymous audience. A great deal of popular culture in modern societies may be thought of in this way.⁵⁵ Doyle's news and message programme was the result of the conflation of cultural forms from more than one of these levels.

The *Doyle Bulletin* was successful because it struck and resonated a chord in the culture of Newfoundland: it was a folk programme because the bulk of its content was supplied by the listeners. The programme was rife with folklore in the forms of formulaic messages of greetings, news of illnesses and deaths and other bits of information, many of which were, for example, susceptible to double meanings. These personal, local and generally folk aspects were, for the listeners, the reason for listening. For Galgay, they were its weaknesses.

"Gatekeeping" is a term used by students of communications to refer to the process of control that some people or institutions have in a complex

⁵⁴ "Popular culture: The world around us" in Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weiser and John L. Wright, eds., *The Popular Culture Reader* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1978), pp. 12-18.

⁵⁵ See, for example Michael Real's *Mass-Mediated Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

information chain, such as the broadcasting system. At each "gate" there are rules, regulations, strictures and norms applied which affect the output of that gate and ultimately, the final product.⁵⁶ The messages sent to the *Bulletin* were couched in folk rhetoric. Galgay preferred that the broadcast output of the stations under his control be polished and cultured. Audiences needed and wanted a bulletin of living messages which were vital and responsive, and to that extent unpolished and, from an elite cultural perspective, "uncultured." The power of the programme was that despite the gatekeeping of the popular medium, and of Galgay's elitist sensibilities in particular, folk communication was maintained.

The production of a programme such as the *Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin* was no small feat. For over thirty years it retained a large audience and injected into the folklore of Newfoundland a rich and vital corpus of verbal play. It is impossible to know whether Galgay and Doyle were able to accomplish this feat due to their efforts or despite them. It is likely that although the station management knew that "factual inaccuracies" were getting through from time to time, and certainly the staff knew and appreciated this fact, were constrained in their desires for "good broadcasting" by their needs for interesting programming. In other words, even if they knew that these things were getting through, they

⁵⁶Samuel L. Becker, *Discovering Mass Communications* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1983), pp. 48 - 54. See also George A. Donohue, Phillip J. Tichenor and Clarice N. Olien, "Gatekeeping: Mass Media Systems and Information Control," in F. Gerald Kline and Phillip J. Tichenor, eds., *Current Perspectives in Mass Communications Research*, 1 (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1972), pp. 41 - 70.

may have turned a blind eye to it for the sake of the audience and the sponsorship.

This is not to overestimate the frequency of humorous messages. In fact they must have been very rare. An audition of extant recorded *Bulletins* reveals that the reality of the programme was quite different from the memories of those who write or talk about it.⁵⁷ There are dry reports of shipping (this ship due at that port such a time, that ship unloading at such port, due to leave at such an hour), very few notices in the "Hospital Reports" (two in the earliest complete programme available, from November 1958), and about twenty or so personal messages, some of which are notices of employment vacancies on ships and items such as boats for sale.

Unfortunately there are no recordings of *Doyle Bulletins* from the 1930s and 1940s. The earliest fragments are from approximately 1949 or 1950, and these contain no personal messages: only non-message segments have survived. In fact these two fragments are both public service announcements. One is by the Canadian Legion; the other is by the Minister of Natural Resources, Hon. E. J. "Ted" Russell, exhorting Newfoundlanders to be careful with fire when in the woods that weekend.⁵⁸ The earliest fragments with personal messages are from June 1953.⁵⁹ There are two complete *Doyle Bulletins*: one is dated 25

⁵⁷ The recordings which have survived are discussed below.

⁵⁸ MUNFLA CBC disc 183A (=PAC tape 131).

⁵⁹ MUNFLA CBC disc 479A/B (=PAC Tape 83).

November 1958;⁶⁰ half of the other is taken up by a report on the funeral of Gerald S. Doyle, 21 June 1958.⁶¹ The messages which survive in the folk memory are the ones which were funny either in themselves or in their interpretations by listeners. One might conjecture that many of the "survivals" were in fact never aired on the programme but made up after the fact on the model of the "ideal" funny message, or perhaps were only suggested by a real message and honed into a funnier form by later tellings. Barre Toelken has referred to this stylisation of reality as a selective process in the overall folklore process.⁶² It is an important aspect of the transformation of daily life into folklore. Some examples of Doyle messages told as legends are as follows.

A woman from one of these [isolated] places came to St. John's on a schooner which brought in a load of fish. Her main reason for coming was to get her teeth out. After she had visited the dentist and the schooner was unloaded, she sent a message to her husband back home [via the *Doyle Bulletin*]. The message read: "To Mr. so and so at such and such a place, from his wife—, 'Teeth out, fish out, coming home tomorrow.'" [MUNFLA FSC 69-23/85]⁶³

The Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin used to announce all kinds of social events for the different communities. It also gave the [weather] forecast. One night an announcement and the forecast were given as follows. "Tomorrow night there will be a bean supper at such a place, and now for the gale warning." [MUNFLA FSC 69-23/86]

⁶⁰ MUNFLA CBC disc 476A/B (=PAC tape 83).

⁶¹ MUNFLA tape CBC204/79-007.

⁶² Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 39.

⁶³ This legend and the two which follow are taken from the Folklore Survey Card collection of Harold Stroud, of Glovertown South, MUNFLA 69-23.

Another message heard on the Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin was from a woman who wasn't feeling very well. When her husband left home he had told her that if she didn't get any better to send him a message. After a few days she sent the message. It read: "Not getting any better. Come home at once." When the announcer read it, he paused in the wrong place and it sounded like this: "Not getting any. Better come home at once." [MUNFLA FSC 69-23/87]

The following excerpt from a published interview with Aubrey MacDonald, for many years one of the *Doyle Bulletin* announcers, includes this last mentioned message as well.

Like one day I read, "Mr. so and so of Burlington would like to thank all those who had anything to do with the death of his wife." And in another one the comma was in the wrong place. It should have been, "Dear John: Not getting any better. Please come home." Instead of that it read, "Dear John: Not getting any, better come home." Then there were For Sale items, one of which read, "For sale: a piano by a woman with square legs."⁶⁴

In an interview in a St. John's daily newspaper special supplement on the history of broadcasting in St. John's, the last compiler of the *Doyle Bulletin*, Patrick K. Doyle remembered two favourite messages: "Had eye operation today. I'll be home on train tomorrow"; and, "Won't be home tonight, hung up on stove."⁶⁵ The idea of someone being actually hung from a stove is perhaps incongruous enough that it has contributed to this message being the most

⁶⁴ Questions: Aubrey Mac, "The Newfoundland Herald TV Week, 34:49 (4 December 1979), 6-7.

⁶⁵ "End of Bulletin Marked New Age," In *The Golden Age of CBN St. John's 640, 1952 - 1982*, supplement to *Evening Telegram*, 29 October 1982, p. 6A.

commonly reported one. Melvin Rowe was News Director at CBN in the last years of the programme, and had been with the station for over thirty years when he retired in 1970.⁶⁶ He remembered these stories with affection:

There have been some [messages that were] dillies, you know, that I can remember. They were genuinely true, too. Like years ago they'd say a fellow came into St. John's, see, probably he wanted to buy a stove. But there was some delay or other. He just couldn't get the stove: "Won't be home tonight -- hung up on the kitchen stove." That's typical Newfoundland language. Boy they were gems, they were precious.[C8954/83-236]

Herbert Pottle, in his discussion of the forms of Newfoundland humour, attributes the following message to Bob MacLeod, another of the long-time readers of the *Bulletin*: "For sale: a schooner, with wench attached, ready for use."⁶⁷

These stories are all either risqué (for instance the "gale warning" and the wife who was "not getting any") or physically grotesque (the man whose eye was coming on the train and the man hanging from his stove). This is typical of blooper stories from the mass media throughout North America. A perusal of Kermit Shafer's collections of bloopers shows that they are not simply mistakes in scripting or reading, but rather mistakes of particular kinds.⁶⁸ Mistakes which become bloopers, or legendary messages from the *Doyle Bulletin*, are those which

⁶⁶Melvin Rowe, *I Have Touched the Greatest Ship* (St. John's: Town Crier, 1970), p. 185.

⁶⁷Herbert Lench Pottle, *Fun On the Rock: Toward a Theory of Newfoundland Humour* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1983), p. 22.

⁶⁸See the list of Shafer's books in the footnote on p. 31, above.

seem to violate the norms of good taste in a medium which had very strict rules of taste.

To return to Galgay's report on the *Bulletin*, he begins with a statement that it was he who started it and kept it going for several years. This stakes his claim, giving authority not only for the following criticisms but also for his gatekeeper's indignation. He then notes that the "English . . . is generally atrocious", and that "the entire Staff has been unable to make any sense of particular items." In order for a message to be included in the programme it first had to be compiled at the office of the Gerald S. Doyle Company. The compiler had little to do with the BCN except to deliver the compiled copy to the station. Undoubtedly many messages arrived at the compiler's office in language which may or may not have been completely explicit to Galgay. Although it may not have been altogether his fault, it is the compiler whom Galgay is blaming here. The population of the country was largely non-literate and perhaps there were indeed many messages which were not completely articulate or phrased in terms familiar to the readers.

The educational sociologist Basil Bernstein suggests a difference in "codes" between populations of lesser and more formally-educated people which he labels "restricted" and "elaborated" codes. Without equating this difference to one of dialect, a confusion of which Bernstein is to some extent guilty, we might note that non-literacy may have led to a kind of "restricted code" in the production of messages for delivery to the Doyle compiler and eventual inclusion

in the *Bulletin*.⁶⁹ One must also take into account that Galgay and his staff were all formally educated persons and residents of St. John's. Dialect differences would have repeatedly presented obstacles to clear and unquestioned readings of the messages. When the compilation arrived at the station, the "entire Staff" were called in for consultation on certain portions. Despite the high-handed tone of this statement, it is suggestive of a situation in which the staff, too, enjoyed the humour of the *Bulletin*.

Narváez notes that Joe Smallwood, as the *Barrelman*, asked his listeners to mail him accounts of prodigious feats and other stories of interest to Newfoundlanders. Smallwood was careful to tell his listeners that they should not worry about the grammar or spelling of their letters: he would "fix it up" for them.⁷⁰ Clearly Galgay's attitude toward the *Doyle News Bulletin* was the opposite of Smallwood's to his *Barrelman* programme. Galgay wanted the copy to arrive in a condition which he could use on the air immediately and without any major editing or other interference. Smallwood on the other hand wanted the real, folk expression of the material he would broadcast.

For Galgay the least connotative and the most denotative message was the ideal. He says that the interpretations possible of some items "border[ed] on

⁶⁹I use these terms in a narrow sense distinct from Basil Bernstein's wider use. As noted, to some degree he confuses the influences of dialect and education. Bernstein's main statement of his theories is to be found in *Class, Codes and Control*, 3 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971-75). An alternative consideration is offered by Harold Rosen, *Language and Class: A Critical Look at the Theories of Basil Bernstein* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1974).

⁷⁰Narváez, "Barrelman," p. 69.

the libellous." Considering the pleasure that listeners got from the *Bulletin*, it seems probable that from time to time some listeners might actually send messages to the *Bulletin* which if not suggestive then might be connotative of things not considered good broadcasting. This is formally similar to graffiti: messages, often with esoteric meanings, written in public places for the pleasure or shock of passers-by. The content of the electronic media often seems to audiences to be impenetrable and monolithic. The attempt by broadcasters to reach as wide an audience as possible often means an anonymous, somewhat faceless style. Pranks break down this monolithism and make the medium approachable. Once the anonymity is breached by this sort of action, then the medium is in a sense possessed by the prankster. The need of a listener to escape from this alienation from the means of communication is part of the attraction of the prank. The "in-joke" character of this sort of prank is also apparent. An example of this in-joke character in media pranks is the request on a local station for the song "Yellow Bird" after the painting of a young man's penis that colour at an inebriate party.⁷¹ The esoteric power of humour is raised when it is broadcast in a public setting and the broadcasting station unwittingly takes part.

Author Ron Pollett suggests that the alienation of elderly people may be an important part of the reason for the success of the *Doyle Bulletin*. His book, *The Ocean At My Door*, is a collection of short stories and opinion from his several decades of writing about his native home, Newfoundland. Although he

⁷¹MUNFLA FSC 66-2/174.

lived in New York from 1925 until his death in 1955, Pollett visited his family home several times during that period and kept in constant touch with Newfoundland through daily tuning in to the St. John's radio station VONF on shortwave.⁷² In an essay, "On going home," Pollett says

... the corner stamping grounds in our place were practically deserted at Doyle time, with all the villagers glued to the radio at home. Now why should my father, tucked away in the social security of his own little world and with plenty of firewood and coal and fish and potatoes, whatever happens outside - why should he tear his shirt to listen to the news that the schooner *Bessie* of Bonavista got 800 quintals, and there are 10,000 pounds of frozen bait at Lamaline, and Mary passed her school examinations and Mrs. Dolly Duff of Petty Harbor had an operation today and was doing fine? Why should any of that be paint off his bottom? But he does care. He's glad the *Bessie* got loaded and happy Mary is smart and thankful Dolly pulled through. And he wants to live to hear the same kind of news tomorrow night. I think this and similar homespun radio fare is the best possible tonic for "lonesome" old souls in the so-called isolated villages - that is, along with the very potent medicine of social security.⁷³

This is a very astute observation and a powerful explanation for the popularity of the *Bulletin*, and not only for the elderly. The "isolation" which the *Bulletin* cured perhaps was not so much that of geography as that of changing social structure. Families were being dispersed in Newfoundland already in the 1920s and '30 (Pollett himself is an example of this), and great changes

⁷²Audrey Schultz Kinsella, "A Biography of Newfoundland-born Author Ron Pollett (1900-55)," unpublished MA thesis, MUN, 1985, p. 54.

⁷³"On going home", in *The Ocean At My Door* (St. John's: Guardian Press, 1956), pp. 268 - 269. This essay was originally published in the monthly magazine, *The Atlantic Guardian*, March 1949. I am grateful to Audrey Schultz Kinsella for pointing out to me this and other references to radio in the work of Pollett.

were wrought in its society and culture in the 1940s. *The Bulletin* gave each listener a stake in a greater family and a greater community at a time when their own families and communities were disintegrating, reducing the alienating influences of increasing mobility and modernity.

Galgay could not come to terms with the *Bulletin*. Part of his difficulty was wanting not to be fooled by the *Bulletin* and, by extension, the *Bulletin*'s listeners. He lacked the ludic, or playful, sensibility which enabled Smallwood to be willingly "lied to" in order that he might in turn "lie" to his listeners with tall tales and the like.⁷⁴ For Galgay broadcasting was a much more serious activity than playing games. It was also part of an even more serious endeavour, government, and even if as we noted above he appeared to ignore the complaints from the Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs about the kinds of messages allowed on the *Bulletin*, these complaints may have coloured his attitude to this potentially ludic function of the show.

Despite any internal conflict the programme continued for thirty-three years. By the time the show went off the air in 1965, it had become something of a national treasure and the final show was not only increased to a full hour from its usual half hour, it was even broadcast across Canada.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Narváez, "Barrelman," p. 74.

⁷⁵ Jean King, "The Doyle News," *Atlantic Advocate*, 56 (June 1966), 80-82; rpt. in B. Morgan, H. Porter and G. Rubia, eds., *From This Place: A Selection of Writing by Women of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Jespersen, 1977), pp. 38-43.

Other message programmes

1. The *Dosco News* was a similar daily broadcast of news, notices and messages which was aired on radio station VOCM, and later its network stations throughout Eastern and Southern Newfoundland, in the 1950s and '60s. It was sponsored by the Bell Island mining company, Dominion Steel Company (DOSCO) and probably came into being because of the popularity of the *Doyle Bulletin*. For a time DOSCO also sponsored a special radio programme each night for Bell Islanders on which local musicians appeared and which also carried news of special importance to residents of that Island.⁷⁶ The *DOSCO News* was VOCM's nightly summary of the day's news, followed by messages to and from listeners.

Chiaramonte notes that the local coverage of radio station VOCM was one of the important conveyors of information on the South Coast of Newfoundland in the early 1960s.

Each community has a VOCM correspondent who sends news to the radio station about events taking place within the community; this news is broadcast daily. The correspondents also send news of any spectacular fishing catches, or such items as a dragger's being tied up in Deep Harbour for a day for the mending of badly-torn nets. VOCM also has a service which broadcasts personal messages; for example, when a woman leaves the hospital in St. John's she will broadcast the time of her departure and the time she expects to arrive home. Her husband is certain to receive the message, for every household tunes in

⁷⁶MUNFLA tape 80-183/C5944.

daily to VOCM.⁷⁷

The anecdotes and legends which have made their way into the folklore of Newfoundland about the *DOSCO News* messages are similar to those which are attributed to the *Doyle Bulletin*. In fact it is likely many stories are attributed to both. These messages are remembered for their humour, either in themselves or in juxtaposition with other messages. Today they are collected and told in much the same way that some people collect and tell jokes. The following is an excerpt from an interview by Debora Kodish with folksinger and song collector Linda Slade.

LS: I write down some things. I've been writing down the *DOSCO News* messages. . . . Well, it's only the ones I've got from people because you don't hear them anymore. . . . I used to think they were real funny.

DK: What were some of them?

LS: Ohh, the one they gave out last night [on a news item about the programme] was, "Mother admitted to Mental Hospital. She thinks she'll be out by Friday." I think they're great.

DK: What was the one about "Father will-?"

LS: "Father had eye out today. Father and I coming home tomorrow." And, "Father got glasses today. Going to Wareham tomorrow."

DK: Have you got a lot of them since you started?

LS: "Take the clothes off Mary Jane. Will be home by Friday." Ohh, there's loads of them.

DK: Were they all funny like that?

LS: Most of them w-. Well, no. I'm sure all the messages weren't. But that's the ones that people remember. . . . Oh yes, "Had adenoids, tonsils and appendix removed today. Spare parts coming on, the *Ranger*."

DK: Oh no. That's terrible.

⁷⁷Chisramonte, *Contracts*, p. 8.

LS: "House burned down. Please come home." That's the one I like.⁷⁸

This interview excerpt gives several examples of the kind of messages remembered by listeners. It is clear that these are very similar, and in some cases almost identical, to those remembered about the *Doyle Bulletin*.

An archival report about the The *DOSCO News* shows radio's role, as late as the early 1950s, in the creation and distribution of traditional culture. An informant from Bell Island made note of a local man singing a song on the programme which was critical of local merchants. The merchants, according to the song, had taken advantage of the Island's being cut off by ice to increase their prices. The programme was the best available medium for such traditional protest, although the merchants tried to prevent the repeated singing of the song.⁷⁹

2. *Calling Newfoundland* was a programme produced in London by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for broadcast during the Second World War to Newfoundland. It was so popular in Newfoundland that it was continued after the War. There it was rebroadcast by the BCN and later the CBC. It was compiled and hosted by Margot Davies, a young woman who had spent part of her childhood in Newfoundland and who retained an affection for the country. Her intention was to compile a programme which allowed Newfoundlanders to keep in touch with their relatives who were serving in the Armed Forces in

⁷⁸ MUNFLA tape C3349/78-008, collector Debora Kodish.

⁷⁹ MUNFLA tape 80-183/C5944, collector: Thomas Galway.

England. After the War the programme expanded to include the activities of any Newfoundlanders in Britain.⁸⁰ The BBC still, in 1986, produces a programme similar to *Calling Newfoundland* for the residents of the Falkland Islands. This programme has had the same format for at least a decade but was expanded from a weekly halfhour programme to a daily two-hour programme during the Argentine occupation in 1982.⁸¹ A listener commented that the Falklands programme

reminds me of the days just after WWII when I... [used] to tune similar messages... going to occupied and war-torn areas... The emotion in the messages is so strong, and so real, that it is a pity those feelings are most often expressed in clichés and the endless repetition of 'Thinking of you constantly.' Of course the speaker is doing that, and of course the listener needs to hear it, but it is the occasional memory or personal anecdote that breaks the heart of even an unintended listener and keeps us turning back to hear the next *Calling The Falklands*.⁸²

This same interest in the messages of other people kept listeners in Newfoundland "turning back" to *Calling Newfoundland* and other message programmes.

Calling Newfoundland was especially important to the Newfoundland audiences during the War years. Often it meant the only contact families had with their sons, brothers or fathers for many months. This is made clear in the following excerpt from a MUNFLA manuscript on life in Maberly, Trinity Bay.

⁸⁰ See the introduction to G. Wilson Knight, ed., *Calling Newfoundland: Poems, 1940-41* by Margot Davies (St. John: M. U. N., 1981).

⁸¹ [Glenn Hauser], "Falkland Islands," *Review of International Broadcasting*, 64 (May 1982), 14; 65 (June 1982), 30.

⁸² Kathleen Lynch, letter, *Review of International Broadcasting*, 65 (June 1982), 30.

A vivid memory of the war years [World War Two] is the occasion of my cousin Ray's speaking to the folks at home over the Newfoundland Programme from London. We had no radio then. In fact there was just one in Maberly, one on the Neck, and perhaps several in Elliston. So, we tramped over to my Uncle Walt's to hear Ray speak. His radio was a floor standing model with a big green-eye-just above the dial. The atmosphere was electric in that kitchen as we waited for the program to begin. There we sat: my uncle, my aunt, mother, an old family friend, and us children ranged along the couch. Father was not present, being away working as usual that fall. I don't recall if any tears were shed at the sound of Ray's voice.⁸³

Davies' programme consisted of her reading messages from servicemen of the sort, "All is fine," "Getting lots of mail," and "Give my love to the family." It also included short, scripted interviews in the studio.⁸⁴

3. The *Great Eastern Oil Bargain Hour* was a nightly programme, which ran on VONF for several years just after the formation of the BCN in 1939. It was a programme of buy and sell announcements from listeners, interspersed with music and advertising messages from the sponsor, a home oil and appliance dealer in St. John's. Gradually, following the model of the *Doyle Bulletin*, the *Bargain Hour* announcer began to read other kinds of messages. This was not an important shift in programming from the point of view of the management of the BCN, until early 1946. The sponsoring company, in an effort to track down some persons who owed them money, listed their names in a "Missing Persons" notice. One of the persons so listed sued the announcer, the

⁸³ MUNFLA ms 70-21, collector, Hilda Murray, pp. 86 - 87.

⁸⁴ See recordings of about fifty of these programmes, MUNFLA 79-007.

station and the Company because; he said, he had paid his bills and "everyone knows" that when a person is named on the *Bargain Hour*, that person has a bad debt to the Great Eastern Oil Company. The affair went to court but the suit was lost.⁸⁵ Except for the personal experience narratives of the announcer involved,⁸⁶ the *Bargain Hour* seems not to have entered the folkloric traditions of Newfoundland as other similar programmes have. Perhaps a large portion of the programme was not devoted to messages and news, and it probably had a smaller audience than the others have had. Certainly, the limited format of acceptable listener input, buy and sell announcements in contrast to the open format of the other message programmes, meant less possibility of folk rhetoric being aired and widespread folk favour being achieved.

Analysis

When the *Doyle News* ended, in 1965, it had become iconic of Newfoundland culture, an example for all Newfoundlanders of the peculiar development of Newfoundland broadcasting. Doyle saw his task with folksongs as one of salvage and popularisation. His involvement in the *News* was different.

Glenn Deir points out that Doyle's business acumen was his main driving force

⁸⁵ On the programme and the "Missing Persons" affair, see the reports by the Acting Manager and the General Manager, March 1946; CNS Galgay Papers, Folders 42 and 116. See also the 1976 interview with Aubrey MacDonald by Denis Budgell, used in the memorial programme to Aubrey MacDonald, *Aubrey Mac: My Way*, CBN Radio, 29 September 1984. A recording of this programme has been deposited in MUNFLA, tape C7422B/85-040.

⁸⁶ See p. 28, above.

with the *Bulletin*.⁸⁷ The programme's popularity was in fact somewhat inadvertent.

The manifest function of the *Doyle Bulletin* for its listeners was information exchange. Likewise their manifest use of the programme was the receiving of messages directed to them. Since at least part of the programme each day was devoted to notices from Governmental agencies which had a wider direction than the personal messages, anyone could listen to the show and likely hear something directed to themselves. Another use was the listening for messages directed to persons with whom the listener was acquainted. This enabled listeners to keep up on news of friends and acquaintances. As we have seen in Chiaromonte's Deep Harbour, this use could be an altruistic one—someone might pass a message on to someone who for one reason or another missed the programme.

James Faris points out that in Cat Harbour one of the routes of news was from a central point to outlying points (the central shop to the neighbourhood shops) and thence to homes. This chain of communication is a useful one in thinking about the role of the *Doyle Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* was able to be a link in the chain at several points. It could supply news wholesale, as it were, to news givers at one of the primary points in a community (in Cat Harbour that might be, for instance, by way of a radio in the central shop). Likewise, the

⁸⁷ Glenn Deir, "We'll Rant and We'll Roar: The Gerald S. Doyle Songbooks," *Livvyere*, 1: 3/4 (Winter/Spring 1982), 38-40.

Bulletin could be the supplier in a local, but still public, gathering (in one of the neighbourhood shops in Cat Harbour). And, finally, to extend the sales metaphor, it could be the retailer of information to a private gathering in the home.

"News" for Faris is basically the same thing as "gossip." However, there is one important difference between the news of the *Bulletin* and gossip: one finds no explicitly negative or demeaning information in the content of message programmes. Of course demeaning information may often be inferred from the messages by listeners. This distinction of explicitness and inference is a major difference between the two commodities.

It is often pointed out that listeners to the *Doyle News* would gather to hear it. Ostensibly this was to save battery wear, but clearly there was also a social function to the custom. Since the news itself had functions beyond the simple transmission of messages to individual receivers, it is not surprising then that the customary gatherings were also social in origin and function, just as gatherings at the Post Office for the Public Despatch and on the wharves for the arrival of the coastal boat were social customs.

Peter Narváez suggests that Joseph Smallwood used his radio programme, *The Barrelman*, to best advantage because of his role as a newteller and a narrator of cuffers, a role which he encouraged.⁸⁸ Although Doyle may never have appeared on his *Bulletin*, his name was clearly associated with it and

⁸⁸ Peter Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood: 'The Barrelman': Broadcaster as Folklorist," *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 5: 1-2 (1983), 60 - 78.

his prestige increased because of this cultural predilection for news and newstellers.⁸⁹ To the extent that it was Doyle himself who was passing on the news to listeners, Doyle was the gossip, accruing cultural points, increasing his prestige.

Robert Paine suggests that the real reasons for gossip are not social in origin but personal. He suggests that everyone who gossips is engaged in information and impression management in what might seem to be a manipulative as well as purposive manner.⁹⁰ Doyle's correspondents, those people who sent his company messages for airing on the programme, were certainly engaged in this kind of impression management. This was done in at least two ways: one was in the choice of words and ideas for inclusion in the message. A poorly chosen word might convey an unfortunate impression of which the sender would acutely be aware. More important than this is the choice of sending a message with his name on it for all to hear, transforming himself from a person known in fairly tight circles of friends, relatives and neighbours, to someone whose name is transmitted through the ether to literally thousands of people. This process transforms the senders into the famous people whose names regularly travel by the same paths. It must have been somewhat prestigious to have a message read on the air.

⁸⁹ Doyle may never have appeared on his *Bulletin* but his funeral took up the entire fifteen minute news portion of the programme on the day that he was buried, in mid-1956. See the recording of this edition of the *Bulletin*, MUNFLA tape CBC204/79-007. The second half of the programme, with the shipping news, notices and messages, remained intact.

⁹⁰ Paine, *op. cit.*

Orrin Klapp has discussed the use of mass media celebrities in modern society, suggesting that fans go on "vicarious identity voyages" by which they might live the lives of their popular culture heroes without leaving the security of their own lives behind.⁹¹ Traditional societies, Klapp suggests, tend to provide identity voyages which reinforce the user's sense of community.⁹² As Pollett suggests, Newfoundland message programmes may have served exactly this purpose. Users of the Newfoundland message programmes were also going on "identity voyages", but not vicariously. Their names, and thereby themselves, were actually being propelled by the mass medium of radio.

Whether or not his correspondents were engaged in information management, certainly Doyle was. He was the greatest gossip of them all. His role in the programme was beyond doubt purposive. It is a moot question whether his purpose was more egoistic, geared towards larger sales of his company's products, or more altruistic, serving the needs of an isolated and poorly communicated country. Mercer and Swackhammer have illustrated the method by which Doyle used books of folksongs to sell drugs and other products.⁹³ Doyle and his successors published five editions of a popular, free-

⁹¹ Orrin E. Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 218.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 218, 238.

⁹³ Paul Mercer and Mac Swackhammer, "The Singing of Old Newfoundland Ballads and a Cool Glass of Beer Go Hand in Hand: Folklore and 'Tradition' in Newfoundland Advertising," *Culture and Tradition*, 3 (1978), 36 - 45.

distribution songster between 1927 and 1978. Here we see him selling his products with other forms of folk communication. The difference lies in the vitality of the cultural forms used in this way: the *Bulletin* was a dynamic entity; the songbooks were static collections which were contextualised by their owners.

Although a great deal more attention has been paid to Doyle's songsters than to his *News Bulletin*, it seems clear that while the songsters had the effect of freezing the popular view of Newfoundland's singing tradition and repertoire, the *Bulletin* actually revealed living, oral traditions, reflecting the conditions of that particular era.

With programmes such as the *Bulletin* there are three classes of "users" in the audience. First, and most obvious, there are the people who send in messages for inclusion in the programme. These are the active users; the manifest purpose of the programme is to serve them. Second are the people to whom the messages are being sent, either the named persons in messages or some portion of the public to whom public service messages are directed. Finally, there are the vast majority of the listening audience neither to whom, nor from whom, any messages have been sent. All those who sent messages, received them, or simply listened in were users of the programme. Different users had different reasons for listening. Audiences of broadcasting media are not passively filled up with the output of the broadcaster. There is interaction and interpretation involved in the uses of all communication media. Radio listeners pick and choose what they will attend to in any broadcast, and select still further what they will remember and share with others.

One listener to the *DOSCO News* in the late 1950s or early 1960s told of sitting each night with her mother and grandmother; her father commuted each week to St. John's and was not present. The two women and the girl would sit in silence listening to the news portion of the programme. The child felt that it was very improper to interrupt the adults' attendance. But when the message portion of the programme began there was a constant commentary: laughing at the messages which might be interpreted in funny ways, suggesting reasons for senders' messages. For example, one of the women would suggest there might be an unmentioned liaison behind a husband's message that he could not get home that night. The women would laugh at their interactive humour. They would follow from night to night and from week to week the illnesses, convalescences or declines of the various people referred to on the programme even though it was rare actually to know anyone whose message was being sent.⁹⁴ No doubt characterisation would develop making the programme a sort of serial drama which contained personalities almost as real as those in the listener's daily life. One can easily overstate this possibility, but it is doubtless part of the attraction.

This concept of the "active audience" is crucial to an understanding of the folkloric nature of the user's response to the mass media.⁹⁵ It is by customary

⁹⁴ Clara Murphy, personal communication, 29 January 1986.

⁹⁵ I take this term "active audience" from an unpublished paper by Martin Laba with that title (St. John's: Memorial University, 1978). A later and substantially different version of the paper is "Popular Culture and Folklore: The Social Dimension," in P. Narváez and M. Laba, eds., *Media Sense: The Popular Culture - Folklore Continuum* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular Culture P, 1986), pp. 9 - 18.

practices, and by verbal reaction and interaction that media users deal with the popular culture which they consume. Laba suggests that a change in sense is required in the reading of the term "tradition" in order to accomodate this "social dimension" of the mass media.⁹⁶ The media are sometimes catalysts of folklore and as such do not inhibit customary processes of folkloric creation, performance, and transmission within groups. Other such catalysts are crises, social tensions and underlying collective anxieties. For instance, Jan H. Brunvand has shown that folklore in the form of contemporary legends seems often to grow out of anxieties shared by large groups of people.⁹⁷ Likewise, the media tend to produce folklore in various forms.

It is an interesting phenomenon of the production of folklore and folk history from daily life that a filtering process takes place. Not every message is remembered by those who now tell tales about the *Doyle Bulletin*; in fact not every type of message is remembered. People usually remember only the humorous kind. Tensions of daily life and work transform daily routine and the things which maintain and interrupt it into folklore by the distancing effects of time and space. For as long as the *Bulletin* was a daily task, something to be kept within the acceptable standards of broadcasting, it remained just a daily task to persons such as Galgay. After it passed from the realm of the present necessity

⁹⁶ M. Laba, "Popular Culture and Folklore: The Social Dimension," *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ See, for example, Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (New York: Norton, 1981).

into that of the remembered, its mundane context was forgotten. At this point it gathered story-value, or at least some aspects of it did, and became folklore.

Malcolm Laws points out that a similar filtering of broadsides occurred between the proliferation of printed texts and the songs which actually went into oral tradition.⁹⁸ It is also the same process which underlies the making of personal experience narrative, and for many people the telling of *Bulletin* legends is a species of personal experience narrative. This is particularly so with radio announcers who worked with the *Bulletin*,⁹⁹ but it is also true of those listeners whose anecdotes are of the type, "I heard this one myself." It is intriguing to speculate why long-time announcer of the *Bulletin*, Evan Whiteway, never offered any such anecdotes nor humorous messages. As Doyle's announcer of preference, perhaps his attitude to the programme was so serious as to preclude content which he viewed as frivolous.¹⁰⁰ On the question of whether mistakes ever were aired, he said

I'd spend three quarters of an hour reading the *Doyle News* to catch errors before I went on the air. Because I'd have to. Occasionally you'd see a death announcement where "Mr. So-and-so died so-and-so; her funeral will take place tomorrow." Now, who was it? Was it a man or a woman who died? So I'd have to call up the chap who wrote the

⁹⁸ G. Malcolm Laws, *American Balladry from British Broadsides* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957), p. xii.

⁹⁹ Such narratives are given in personal interviews with Aubrey MacDonald, an announcer, and Melvin Rowe, a press room operator, MUNFLA tapes C6248, C6948/83-236 and C6955/83-236.

¹⁰⁰ Personal interview with Mr Evan Whiteway, 23 August 1984, MUNFLA Tape C7426/85-040.

News Bulletin. And a thing like that could be very upsetting if you get the wrong sex. Yeah. It was just a misprint, it could happen to anybody, especially when you're typing out forty pages or so. [PH: I imagine some of those slips came through, did they? They made it on the air?] I wouldn't think so. I think you are very careful about that. I've never heard of any. [C7428/85-040]

There are similarities between message programmes and request shows. They involve listeners' writing or otherwise contacting the station and asking for particular songs to be played, often being dedicated to a third party. Like message programmes but to a lesser degree, request shows are interactive between audience and station. By such interaction they are able to breach the anonymity of the medium. The "gatekeeping" in request shows is a little more thorough than with message shows: often requests are whittled down simply to a list of names with no other messages than the implied, or inferred, ones. The majority of time is covered not in messages but in the other cultural content of the programme: advertising and music.

Open-line shows, too, have a current of interaction between station and audience. Like both message programmes and request shows, only a small proportion of the audience actually makes the contact in order to be heard on the programme. In a way similar to the prankster of the message programme, the open-line show can reduce the alienation of certain listeners.¹⁰¹ For the vast majority of users of the programmes, the listeners rather than the contributors,

¹⁰¹ See Martin J. Lovelace, "Gossip, Rumour and Personal Malice: The Rhetoric of Radio Open Line Shows," in P. Narváez and M. Labs, eds., *Media Sense*, pp. 19-30.

the shows introduce a set of known and expected characters. Since the statements by callers are not normally "messages" but rather broadcast opinion, the content is not a great deal like that of message programmes. Instead the programmes are more like serial drama. The listener comes to know the individual callers, some of whom call every day, establishing what Ulf Hannerz would call, "cognitively functioning relationships" with the listeners.¹⁰² In this sense the output of open-line shows is much like gossip, or the raw material for gossip, about known persons.

It would be useful to have a means of categorising programmes and their relationships with their audiences, in terms of folk and popular culture. If we look at message programmes as folk radio, then we can look at request and open-line shows as popular culture items which use some folk input but which are not in themselves folk cultural items. It is not likely to be very useful simply to have a distinction between "folk" shows and "non-folk" shows which is a yes-or-no distinction. More useful would be a system of distinctive features each of which would be indicative of an ideal type of programme, folk or non-folk. A descriptive continuum would thereby be set up by which programmes might be evaluated on their folkloric form and content. These distinctive features might include such overlapping qualities as "audience input" (whether it exists or not), "publicisation of medium" (broadcast versus closed circuit or point-to-point),

¹⁰²Ulf Hannerz, "Gossip, Networks and Culture in a Black American Ghetto," *Ethnos*, 32 (1967), 35-60.

"minimal gatekeeping" (little shaping by medium), "private content" (messages are shaped by contributors) and "free access" (all who ask are given access).

Conclusion

The role of message programmes in the community life of the Newfoundland outport in the mid-twentieth century has been examined in two lights. One is that of the social anthropology of gossip and interaction. The other is that of scholarship in communications and media study. The first allowed us to see the programmes as customary practises, illuminating their role in the daily lives of members of the communities, pointing out how they were used and for what purposes. The second allowed us to look somewhat more generically at the programmes viewing them as artifacts of a developing and changing media industry, reflecting and reproducing the information needs of the community, while at the same time producing new means of communications.

Although message programmes are similar in certain structural ways to other programme types, the differences make their social functions quite unique. However, the functions of the message programmes link this programme type to a chain of similar social phenomena. Diachronically, the social gathering and networking associated with news was an important factor in the success of such programmes as the *Bulletin*. Synchronically, there is a link with alienation and the attempts of listeners to overcome it. The *Bulletin* was a folk programme in a popular medium. It was a bridge between two societies: the older, traditional, fully integrated society of the Newfoundland outport and the newer, modern,

alienated one of twentieth century electronic culture. In bridging this gap the *Bulletin* validated the traditional culture by making it legitimate content for the new medium. In so doing it served as an agent of social and cultural change in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Chapter 4

The Irene B. Mellon Radio Programme

The *Irene B. Mellon* first went on the air at 7:15 p.m., 24 January 1934 on radio station VOGY in St. John's. With a few short breaks it remained on the air for eight seasons, just over seven years, making its final broadcast on the evening of 29 April 1941. During its lifetime the *Irene B. Mellon* entered the folk memory of its audience. The folk history of radio broadcasting in Newfoundland includes the *Mellon* as one of its important parts. The programme contributed to the folklore repertoire of Newfoundland through the production of songs and the promulgation and amplification of folkloric forms from various genres. To some extent it shaped the lives of the people who were involved with its production, its vestigial effects still apparent almost five decades after the end of the series. The programme itself was a clear reflection of certain aspects of the folklore and folklife of Newfoundland at the time while being an artifact of the popular medium by which it was transmitted. The *Irene B. Mellon* is examined here as a cultural phenomenon having aspects both of popular and folk cultures; on the one hand it reflected these cultures and on the other hand it shaped them.

The scripts of the *Irene B. Mellon* were all preserved by its author and retained after his death by his family. Of the one hundred seventy episodes aired the scripts of 157 remain (thirteen have been lost in recent years). These have

been microfilmed by the Provincial Reference Library and photocopied by MUNFLA and these copies are available for research.¹

John Cawelti suggests that genres of popular literature such as the Western novel and film have "conventional formula" instead of individual structures.² No genre of radio drama like the *Mellon* existed, but we can still refer to the conventional formula of the series. This formula was that a three-masted Newfoundland schooner, manned by a crew of from eight to ten men, travelled around much of the world taking cargoes, having adventures and, perhaps most importantly, playing music. Besides the all-male crew, the schooner picked up a little girl as a stowaway, six year-old Rose, who remained aboard until the end of the series. The ship was skippered by a man known in the script only as the Master, although he was known among the crew as the "Oldman." The Master was played by the same man who authored, produced and directed the entire show: Edward John "Jack" Withers. Rose was played by his daughter Marie Withers. The Mate aboard the *Mellon* was never known by any other name and was played by Ted Coleman. The Boatswain was always referred to either as "Bosun" or as "Pat" and was played by Jack Withers' brother-in-law, Pat DeBourke. The Cook was always known as such and was played by Jim Ring. The remaining crewmembers, comprising the port watch, were Mac and Frank,

¹ These were made available by Ted Withers and are catalogued in MUNFLA under the accession number 85-341.

² John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, [ca. 1970]), pp. 25 - 26.

played respectively by Ern MacDonald and Frank O'Toole. As the series progressed the characters developed and Frank became less of a main character while another character of Frank O'Toole's became one of the most important ones. This was Willie, the only character which was clearly and obviously not a Newfoundlander, being born and raised a London Cockney. Less obviously, Rose was not a Newfoundlander either, having been found as a stowaway on a trip north from the Caribbean island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras, the orphaned child of English parents.

Together this crew travelled all over the North and South Atlantic Oceans, into the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas, around the Antarctic continent, up the Congo River and into the Arctic icepacks. They endured starvation at sea, warfare in the Spanish Civil War, drug poisoning from tropical African plants, imprisonment by German U-Boat seamen, near shipwrecks, practical jokes, brawls in seaports and personal foibles. They experienced the quiet pleasures of being driven before good winds, of good wines and liquors in many ports, young lady friends, and above all the tobacco products of the Imperial Tobacco Company.

For most of the lifetime of the series the sponsor of the programme was the Imperial Tobacco Company, Ltd. It was not the only sponsor, nor its first. When the programme first began, in 1934, the sponsor was Cousins' Dry Cleaning in St. John's. During the first episode three of the characters had the following conversation:

Mac: Say Frank that ain't your best suit all messed up like that.

Frank: Yes that's it after that policemen in Pernam hauled me out of the river. She looks bad. Guess I'll have to spend half my wages and get another when I get ashore. That was a grand suit, too. Cost me thirteen fifty two years ago.

Pat: No take it to Cousins and get it cleaned. You see that one I have?

Frank: That new blue.

Pat: That ain't new. That's been cleaned at Cousins and what a job. You should have seen it after I had crawled up a drain pipe to dodge a bull that got loose in Spain a couple of voyages ago. And that drain wasn't as clean as Pernam River, and that's saying something.

Frank: Guess I'll try Cousins.³

Pat DeBourke remembered a small accident he had in which he soiled his overcoat and some nearby children, familiar with the radio programme and with DeBourke as the Bosun, referred to the sponsor:

I remember so well, I was down in Quida Vida one Sunday morning. The snow was on the ground and I had a lovely overcoat on me. And the young fellas there - I gave them a quarter or something to get them to take me down over the hill on a slide. And I went down on the slide, right down, right down to the brook. I got down to the marsh and my coat was all filled with snow. The young fella was there, only that height, waiting for us to knock the snow. Now Cousins' had the sponsor at the time, the dry cleaning. He said, "Now Pat why don't you take it Cousins'?" A little fella about twelve years old. I looked at him. "Well good God. [PH: He knew.] Yes, cause he was listening. (C8439/86-088)

Cousins' sponsorship did not last past the first season. In fact it is only in the first episode that the company is mentioned in the script. The next sponsor

³ MUNFLA 85-341, Irene B. Mellon script #1, pp. 4 - 5. Scripts are hereafter cited in the form "BM#1, pp. 4-5" with or without the broadcast date, as appropriate.

was the East End Baking Company as the following handwritten addition to script number 21 indicates. This programme was aired 21 June 1934, near the end of the first season:

You have been listening to a program presented by East End Baking Co., makers of Our Own Bread Products. Our Own Malted Milk Bread offers the best food value obtainable, delicious and nutritious. When ordering bread insist on Our Own. We also remind you that Our Own Bread wrappers can be exchanged for valuable Premiums - Save them.

The East End Baking Company's products were never mentioned within the script as were the services of Cousins' and the later sponsors. In fact they were never mentioned again at all.

The next sponsor was Canadian Marconi Company, Ltd., which was one of the main manufacturers of radio receiving sets distributed in Newfoundland at the time.⁴ Marconi did not carry the show very long either but during one episode under their sponsorship a scene was devoted to extolling the virtues of that make of receiver. The scene is the Master's cabin while the ship is tied up in Boston harbor. Visiting the Master are Captain Brueon of the *Gladys* and Mr. Shantan, a Boston radio merchant. Also present is the Mate of the *Mellon*. Shantan has been telling the Master the value of having a radio on board the vessel and trying to sell him one.

⁴Newspapers of the era carried large advertisements for radio sets from as many as six different St. John's dealers including the local branch of Canadian Marconi. See for example the *Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1934.

Master: Hold on now. Not so fast. I haven't said I was going to buy one. And if I was I don't know what kind is best.

Brueon: Well, Capitan. We have de small radio on de *Gladys* and she was plenty good. We get de nice music and de wedder reports all de tam. We get ours in Quebec dis fall.

Master: What make is it, Captain?

Brueon: Marconi. You know de beeg-man dat firs made de radio. Marconi. An I tell you she is de very good radio.

Master: Are they very expensive?

Brueon: Non. Non. I tink you get de good Marconi as cheap as any oder radio.

Shantan: I would recommend the Farno. That's the make I represent, although I must admit the Marconi is one of the best makes. But let me send you one down tomorrow Captain.

Master: What do you think, Mister?

Mate: I'd buy a Marconi, sir. It must be a good outfit because Marconi is the man that first invented radio. And the captain of the *Gladys* says he gets satisfaction.

Brueon: Oui. Oui. We get de plenty music all de tam.

Master: Yes, I guess we'll try Marconi.

Shantan: I can get one, Captain. I'll send one down first thing tomorrow morning. Just to try, Captain. Just to try.

Master: Alright we'll try it. But it must be a Marconi. Here, Captain, fill your glass again. (IBM#31, pp. 12-13)

This was broadcast in 1935. Sales of radios were booming that year in St. John's.

In June, 1935, Sir Cecil G. Graves, Director of Empire and Foreign Services in the British Broadcasting Corporation, was sent out to Newfoundland to make a report to the Commission of Government on the state of broadcasting in the Country.⁵ Graves reported that there were between 8000 and 10,000 radio sets on the Island. He suggested that "it is not unreasonable to look to a figure of

⁵ Asa Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, volume II of his *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford UP, 1965), p. 389.

20,000 sets in a year or two's time.⁶

The sponsor which carried the programme for the longest period, in fact during five years of its life, was the Imperial Tobacco Company which owned and operated a tobacco factory in St John's. Its name brands were local ones and were ideally suited to the programme for this reason. In an early episode, aired before the Company's sponsorship, one crew member tells another not to smoke his cheap, harsh tobacco in the presence of Rose, the stowaway orphan girl (IBM #20, p. 12). This solicitude regarding a non-smoker's rights, or perhaps regarding the example to be set by an adult, is never heard after the Tobacco Company began to underwrite the show. The first mention of an Imperial Tobacco product came in episode #49a when the Master says

I've smoked nearly every tobacco I ever heard tell of, from Covely to those expensive tinned mixtures. I like Beaver best, doesn't burn out too quick in the wind. [IBM #49a, 1 December 1936, p. 8]

At the end of this programme the station announcer read that on the following Tuesday night "the Imperial Tobacco Company will again take you aboard" the *Irene B. Mellon*. The company continued to take listeners aboard until the end of the series in 1941 and in almost every second programme one of its products was mentioned, usually with a short conversation between characters praising the product. Beaver Plug tobacco was the overall favourite of the crew: it was

⁶ Sir Cecil Graves, *Report on Broadcasting in Newfoundland*, June 1935, Public Records Office XC/A/023065 - DO35/505-N1071/12. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Neary for showing me this document.

relaxing, easy on the tongue and calmed the nerves.(IBM #78, p. 13: #161, p. 4)

A typical address on this matter was made by Pat.

Boy, that's where a pipeful of Beaver goes good, up there on the lookout, sittin' on the engine house and the stars almost touchin' your head. And the pipeful of Beaver lasts so long in the open air, you ain't all the time fillin' up, it's nice and cool not like some tobaccos, burnin' the tongue off you, and your pipe burnin' out every five minutes. No sir you get a fine long smoke with Beaver.(IBM #80, p. 10.)

Some question was made among the crew whether Beaver Light or Beaver Dark was better (IBM #50, p.10) and the Master came to enjoy the Light plug better (IBM #71, p. 12). His preference for one of the Beaver grades is the only one mentioned in the scripts.

That Beaver tobacco was a very popular brand in Newfoundland and Labrador can be seen from a Labrador Inuktitut song, "Ittu-laite," which includes Beaver tobacco as one of the desirable things belonging to a man to whom the singer wishes she were married.

Te-da-lum-de, Te-da-lum-de
I wish I were married
To Sammy, to Sammy,
Who has tobacco, who has tobacco.

Te-da-lum-de, Te-da-lum-de
I wish I were married
To Sammy, to Sammy,
Who has Beaver tobacco,
Who has Beaver tobacco.⁷

⁷ *This translation is not meant to be sung. It was included to give the English reader an idea of the meaning of this Inuktitut song.* Beatrice Watts, et al., *Songs of Labrador* (Northwest River, Labrador: Labrador East Integrated School Board, 1982), p. 28.

This is a translation of the first two verses of the song; the following two verses mention brands of tobacco other than Beaver which Sammy has.

As the Company introduced new products into the market, the *Mellon* was one of their advertising outlets. Beaver Plug was an uncut tobacco which required the smoker to carve shavings for his pipe off a stick of tobacco. In late 1937 the ship is just leaving the North African port of Oran to search for a Spanish pirate submarine and Pat offers Frank some Beaver. Frank replies,

No, I've got some Big Ben here, it's handy when you want to get a smoke in a hurry, it's already cut. And a fine smoke. [IBM #79, 28 December 1938, p. 9]

Two years later the Cook voices a similar qualification on his preference for Beaver:

Beaver's fine on deck. Lasts a long time out in the wind. But here in the galley I'd almost as soon this Big Ben. You don't have to take time cuttin' it: and then you can roll a cigarette or fill your pipe out of the same tin. It's nice and handy. [IBM #134, 6 February 1940, p. 6.]

A few minutes later Mac says, "Boy that's a fine smoke, Cook. What's it called? 'Big Ben' in a red tin." (IBM #134, p. 9)⁸

When the crew was stuck in the icepack off Labrador for weeks and in fact had been without any food for a week, having been raided by a German submarine, they began to talk about perhaps dying. At this point the Master

⁸ Advertisements for Big Ben Tobacco were also used on the government station, VONF. An undated recording, probably from 1939 or 1940, was preserved from that period and contains the chimes used in the otherwise live ads for the product: MUNFLA CBC disc #135 (PAC tape #20)/79-007.

broke out his special supply of Woodbine cigarettes and gave a pack to each member of the crew (IBM #140, p. 11). A single pack each of cigarette did not last long, however, and "the boys," as they are often known, revert to smoking their supplies of Big Ben. After a further week without food, Pat commented, "Havin' lots of Big Ben to smoke is the only thing that's made life worth livin' the past week" (IBM #141, p. 11).

In March 1941 the product Yankee Clipper was introduced to the programme. The schooner was in port in the Bay of Fundy where the crew were taking part in a concert being emceed by the local merchant, a French Canadian named Laree. Between songs M. Laree made sure his audience was aware of the new product just brought to his store by the *Irene B. Mellon*, Yankee Clipper tobacco, in the "nice leetle tin can wat only cos you twenty cents" (IBM #164, 18 March 1941, p. 11).

Without advertising the *Irene B. Mellon* would never have come into being, nor would it have lasted as long as it did. More than today when there are at least a few non-commercial outlets for cultural products in the broadcasting media, in the 1930s programmes were paid for by the purchase of a block of airtime by a sponsor. Later the introduction of advertising "spots" became more

widespread until today it is rare to have advertising of the block sort.⁹

Like other serial programmes, action was usually carried over from one episode of the *Irene B. Mellon* to the next. Plots continued for months overlapping with new sub-plots, all of which were set in the mesh of the basic formula. Some motifs of that basic formula would return in later episodes, often years later, sustaining in listeners' minds a continuity of overall plot.

Interest in the programme was retained through a number of techniques by the producer, Jack Withers. The characters were believable and developed over time in response to the various situations which were parts of the scripts. But as they changed, they also retained basic qualities, giving continuity for new dramatic situations. Undoubtedly there were repetitive forms of acting, useful in characterisation, which have not been preserved in the scripts. Some techniques of familiarisation have come through, though, because they were written into the scripts.

⁹ Although CBC radio has almost completely done away with advertising of all kinds in the past twenty years, it still retained in the 1980s a sponsored programme of the block sort: the "Saturday Afternoon At The Met" weekly opera broadcasts from the New York Metropolitan Opera, sponsored by Texaco Oil. In recent decades public television in the United States has utilised block sponsorship to provide "advertising-free" programming. The changes in radio programming and formats which were an effect of the huge popularity of television in the 1950s partially are responsible for the decline in this method of sponsorship. When television took away audiences, radio drama on the large networks became a thing of the past. In the place of longer "programmes" came disc-jockey shows and other formats of a magazine type. These facilitated the use of short, spot-type commercials which had been around since the beginning of radio but which now came to dominate. See Thomas Meehan, "Twilight of the Soaps," in Poynts Tyler, ed., *Television and Radio* (New York: Wilson, 1961), pp. 13 - 18, and other articles in the same volume which deals with the two media in the late 1950s and early 1960s. See also the chapter, "Radio," in Samuel L. Becker, *Discovering Mass Communications* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1983), pp. 258 - 291.

Personal physical descriptions of the characters are rare. When they were introduced it was for narrative purposes related to the story as it was developing. Radio is a medium particularly suited to the imaginative powers of the audience. Frances Gray suggests that this is due to its "intimacy" as a medium. Listeners, says Gray, are drawn into the programming, "participating in the creative act."¹⁰ Part of the "participation" is this-filling in of details about characters.¹¹ The pictures listeners had of the characters in the Mellon's crew were first and foremost a product of their own imaginations. The Imperial Tobacco Company had for some time previous to their sponsorship of the *Mellon* programme been giving away small gifts to their customers who sent in collections of coupons and box tops from their products.¹² In 1939 they offered listeners of the *Irene B. Mellon* photographs of the crew members of the schooner in return for a number of these product labels. These photos were postcard sized individual pictures. Late in 1939 the Company sent out Christmas cards and 1940 calendars to the customers who had requested the photographs. These consisted of composite photographs of all the members around a central picture of the *Irene*

¹⁰Frances Gray, "The Nature of Radio Drama," in Peter Lewis, ed., *Radio Drama* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 51.

¹¹This, of course, is in contrast with McLuhan's view of the "hot" medium of radio: "... hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience. Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience." Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 22.)

¹²See for example their full page advertisements in succeeding issues of the *St. John's Observer's Weekly*, January 1937.

B. Mellon itself. Len Coleman, a banjo player who appeared on the programme several times and whose brother, Ted, was one of the regular company recalled how one of the pictures was made:

Did you see the picture that Ted had down there, the Christmas card they made? [PH: Yeah. With the boat in a harbour?] With a picture of the *Mellon* in the centre and the crew all around. Well that was a model they took, a three-masted model they had. It was only about that long, you know. [PH: Is that right? So it's only about twenty inches.] Yeah. He [Jack Withers] got down in Quidi Vidi Pond, he got out in a rowboat and he pushed the model out. He got the camera right down by the water and took a shot of it. [PH: It was Jack took the picture!] Yeah. Yeah. He put that on the Christmas card they had with pictures of the crew all around. I remember that. They made it up into a Christmas card and sent it around to all their friends and that. [PH Who paid for that?] Jack did, I think he paid for all of it. [LAUGHS] It was a great hobby with him. [MUNFLA Tape C8440/86-088, interview 26 March 1986]

The rest of pictures were taken by a professional photographer. The members of the cast posed in their various characters' personae, replete with oilskins, pipes and false beards, on a schooner tied up in St. John's Harbour while a local photographer took pictures. The photographer was Stan Cullen who had a studio in the 1930s on Water Street.¹³

Characters

The Cook is the character who throughout the series remained most often in the fore of the lighter parts of the stories. Perhaps for this reason, he is

¹³ Ted and Mrs. Frankie Coleman, unrecorded interview, 18 November 1984, field notes on tape C7431/85-040. Information on Cullen from Mr. Tony Murphy, Film and Sound Archivist, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador.

also the character given the greatest amount of explicit personal description. He is described as a short, "thick-set" man (IBM #51, p. 10), bald with ginger whiskers (IBM #25, p. 7; #42, pp. 11-12). When he is on shore the Cook lives in Shell Cove, in an undesignated part of Newfoundland (IBM #130, p. 15). He is not quick to grasp new ideas except when they might keep him from working; then he is extraordinarily resourceful and creative. He is as short in temper as he is in stature, a character trait which gets him into fights with other crew members from time to time and into brawls on shore, often leading to his imprisonment for shorter or longer periods of time. Rather than fight, though, he is as likely to sneak away from a brawl unscathed. He likes to talk and his favourite story is that of his trip on board a vessel which traveled for over a hundred days "around the Horn." But each time he starts this story his fellow crew members tell him to stop as they, unlike the audience, have heard it too often. Once only did the radio audience hear the Cook tell his tale (IBM #21, 21 June 1934, p. 3) despite his being otherwise voluble. He thinks the other crew members are lazy, comparing them to the "real sailors" on his hundred day voyage. They were "Real sailors," he says, "not like you guys. You get to sea for a dog watch and then you want to go to the Nickel or somewhere. Bah!" (IBM #12, 19 April 1934, p. 2.) The Nickel Theatre was a popular cinema in St. John's where the latest movies were shown.¹⁴ He is particularly testy when they interrupt him in the galley asking for

¹⁴On the Nickel Theatre, owned by the Benevolent Irish Society, and opened near the turn of the century, see Paul Mercer's 1977 interview of Ron Young, longtime manager of the Nickel Theatre: MUNFLA tape C3637/78-237.

a tune on his accordion. But he always acquiesces to a tune after which one or another might say "If only the Cook could cook like he can play, we'd have no complaints" (IBM #49, 24 November 1936, p. 16).

Rose was an exceptional child, written perhaps as her father would have liked the real child Marie Withers to be: perfectly obedient, truthful, independent and forthright. Rose enjoyed the music and songs of her shipmates and learned songs quickly, contributing to every episode in some way. One recurrent motif was that each time the ship neared North American ports Rose's rich grandfather in New York would make attempts to take her with him. She always went willingly but under protest and later found her way back to the ship. In one episode she was kidnapped by South American Indians in what appears to have been the final episode for that season (IBM #42, 3 May 1935, p. 22). The series did not begin again until six months later; in that programme her fate was left unexplained. The programme then experienced its longest hiatus, of a further ten months and in the opening programme of the new season it was simply stated that she had been freed (IBM #44, 20 October 1936, p. 1).

Frank the seaman was played by Frank O'Toole, the actor, known particularly for his impressions. His two main characters were Frank and Willie, the latter being a Cockney seaman taken on in West Africa during the 1938 summer hiatus (IBM #97, 1 November 1938, p. 1). The sounds made by the many animals which appeared in the programme were also his responsibility; these included dogs, a monkey, an alligator, a shark, a parrot, and a bear and its

cub. O'Toole actually owned a parrot and was thus familiar with its sounds.¹⁵ Unlike the Cook, there was not much which distinguished the character Frank from the other seamen. Probably because of this the character was deleted from the series for almost three years. During this time he was said to have taken sick and put ashore in Canada. When he reappeared he was rescued from a ship he had signed onto and which had been sunk by the pirate submarine for which the *Mellon* was searching.¹⁶ During his absence however the real Frank O'Toole was still at work in the programme, doing impressions of animals and portraying visiting characters who came aboard the vessel.

His main character for the last years of the programme was Willie, the Cockney sailor. Willie was never physically described except that once he was the only man aboard who was small enough to crawl through the hatch between the galley and the forecastle (IBM #139, 14 March 1940). Willie was a tenacious man, though, always ready for a bit of sport and a natural ally of the Cook. Most of the misadventures in the later shows are due to the machinations of Willie and the Cook. Willie learned how to play the mouth organ in his second season (IBM #124) and from then on had a role which remained more conspicuous than Frank's. The character Frank never again sang or played an instrument, although from time to time he briefly appeared as a speaking character.

¹⁵ Personal interview, Ted Withers, 17 November 1983, MUNFLA tape C6956/83-236; interview Pat DeBourke, 6 Dec 1983, MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236; fieldnotes, p. 30.

¹⁶ Frank went ashore IBM #28, 21 December 1934, and came back aboard IBM #77, 14 December 1937.

The Mate was said to have whiskers like Santa Claus (IBM #127, [19] December 1939, p. 11), and several times he was called into brawls to preserve the lives of his crew, showing himself to be an able fighter and a powerful man. Unlike the Master of the vessel, the Mate never married (IBM #70, 27 April 1937, pp. 2-3). His home on shore, in St. John's, was kept by his sister.

The Master was married but he never mentioned his wife except once to say he had one (IBM #70, pp. 2-3). Nor did he mention any children. The Master was never described physically. His relationship to Rose was paternal as was the Mate's. They both gave her gifts, cared for her, took her sightseeing in ports and sang to her at night. Both of them were somewhat embarrassed by this last habit (IBM #33, 8 March 1935, p. 14).

Like Frank, Mac was for the most part a background character, although he rose to the fore frequently. He often appeared as a buffer between the argumentative Cook and Willie. In the penultimate programme, after the Bosun left the vessel, Mac was promoted to that job, as he had been temporarily some time before when the Master had to leave the ship to testify against the Spanish pirates (IBM #84 - 87, 1 - 22 February 1938). This promotion of Mac is in keeping with the role of peacemaker among the crew, the foremost role of the Bosun throughout the series. He was the liaison between the Master and Mate ("fore" crew) and the men ("aft" crew). Although he was able to mix with the men, play music with them and even plot with them, he acted as representative of the officers when it came to passing on orders.

The most strongly delineated characters on the *Irene B. Mellon* were also the ones which developed most over the years. For instance, in the early programmes, the Cook was a buffoon, the butt of jokes and even a poor cook. Later he became known for his wiles, his ability to squirm out of situations and deflect punishment onto others. Later still, when Willie the Cockney appeared, the Cook became from time to time a moderating influence upon Willie in his endeavours, although the two of them remained the main instigators of trouble aboard the vessel.

As the characters developed over the years, so too did the stories. The *Irene B. Mellon* began as an outlet for music within a frame of believable life on board a sailing vessel. In the first few programmes the music seemed to be the primary presentation of the show. The fictive frame of the schooner remained only a convenience. Soon thereafter, however, the frame became important in itself and by episode number three there is a scene in which the crew are heard hard at work trying to bring the vessel into St. John's harbour in poor weather conditions. Later on, this same sort of scene, the men at work, is used in other situations, such as vicious storms, or when they are being chased by enemies. In the first few episodes Withers developed his skills in writing believable dialogue which was able by itself to convey the work activities aboard a sea-going vessel. In later programmes he was able to use these skills to advantage in scenes of greater drama.

It is this increasing dramatic excitement which defines the change which occurred in the *Mellon* programmes over the first few years. The music became an interlude to the adventures which the "boys" were experiencing and the problems which they were trying to solve.¹⁷ They gradually made a number of stock enemies, based mainly on popular cultural themes. For instance a gang of international smugglers and kidnappers tried over and over again to take Rose for ransom. In the early thirties the Lindberg case was well-known and widely broadcast; having a similar story in their own series allowed the *Irene B. Mellon* to parallel the exciting stories of the popular news media.¹⁷

Not all enemies were based on popular culture themes: some came from folk culture themes. For several weeks the crew ran into problems with a man and his crew from somewhere on the Southern Shore. The man was something of a local bully who considered himself above the law. "I don't need no law to look out for my rights," he says (IBM #95, 10 April 1938, p. 19). They eventually came to blows with him; one of the crew knocked him out and this humiliation was enough for him to leave them alone. This character is reminiscent of the legendary "Masterless Men" of the Southern Shore of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula who were said to live in the country behind the littoral communities

¹⁷ The Lindberg baby was kidnapped in February 1932. Almost exactly three years later, in February 1935, Bruno Hauptmann was found guilty of kidnapping and murdering the child. This court case was perhaps the most publicised trial of that decade and probably found its way into every newspaper in North America. Radio news services of the day provided daily reports on the progress of the trial. The theatres in St. John's carried newsreels about the trial within a couple of weeks of its end. See, "Peeps Behind The Scenes", *Observer's Weekly*, St John's, March 1935.

to live a pirate-like, extra-legal existence.¹⁸ Withers may have been influenced by the folk legend in writing about this character and in setting the scene for the story.

The *Mellon* attracted and retained a radio audience because listeners empathised with the crew. This was sometimes accomplished through the use of antagonists which, rather than being obvious enemies, were simply threatening characters. For instance, Rose's grandfather is a rich American who is continually trying to get custody of his granddaughter. It is always hoped, not just by the crew, but also by Rose, herself, that he will be unable to do this. More often than not it is through the underhanded wiles of the Cook that Rose escapes the fate of leaving the ship forever.

As World War II approached, patriotic sentiments appeared more and more often in the scripts of the *Mellon*. Before War actually broke out, this took the form of a kind of League of Nations action being carried out by the crew. In 1937 they were chartered by the "World Anti-Piracy Commission" to attract and sink a well-known pirate in the Mediterranean Sea. They do this for the sake of freedom of the waves. Since the Master is a pacifist, he allows the pirate crew to be captured rather than killed. His pacifism is never mentioned after War breaks out but he is still loathe to kill defenceless seamen, even if they are Germans. Nonetheless, the crew become active in the anti-German fight. Their justification

¹⁸Harold Horwood, "Rum-runners and Masterless Men," in *Newfoundland* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 113-121, particularly 119-121.

for this activity takes the form of both pro-British patriotism ("We are British Sailors!") and anti-ideological belief.

In times of war media are marshalled to transform patriotic ideals into observable and even tangible items of popular culture. Raised to almost sacrosanct levels, the sources of such cultural materials are often political and military leaders. A political leader's address on patriotism in a time of emergency is very much like a great poet's work, quoted as it is, repeated and given exegesis. The last two seasons of the *Irene B. Mellon* were aired during such a time of national emergency, the Second World War, and patriotic themes and speeches run throughout the programmes of that period. The following is a speech given by the Mate just four months after the declaration of war.

[Democracy] ain't given me much: a lifetime at sea and underpaid. But just the same under democracy conditions will improve. It may take time but when conditions do improve we'll be free to enjoy them. Not like them izms -- they'll give you plenty of work, yes. In the Army. And instead of money for workin' they give you a black shirt and tell you you're doin' grand for your country. No sir. Democracy got its faults but it's the best there is today and I'm fightin' for it. (IBM #129, 2 January 1940, p. 17)

After an episode in which the *Mellon* crew sank a German U-Boat and later captured its crew, rumours circulated which underline the fact that the *Mellon* was seen during the War primarily to be fighting Germans. The plot of the *Mellon* chasing a U-Boat, giving it adulterated fuel oil, then finding it stuck in the Labrador icefields, and capturing the crew who had gone ashore and captured a Newfoundland fishing village, is carried through episodes #123 through 144,

almost the entire 1939-40 season. These rumours, circulating around St. John's, had it that the German radio propagandist, Lord HaHa, made official denials that a small Newfoundland vessel under sail had done such a thing.¹⁹

Musical Instruments

The musical instruments played by the members of the *Irene B. Mellon* were the popular instruments of the day in Newfoundland. They included a button accordion, played by Jim Ring, the Cook; a violin, played by Pat DeBourke, the Bosun (DeBourke also stepdanced); a Hawaiian guitar, which is to say an acoustic guitar played with a metal slide, played by Ted Coleman, the Mate; a guitar, played by Ern MacDonald, Mac; and a mouth organ, played by Frank O'Toole, Frank and Willie. From time to time the piano accordion was played by Jack Withers and the comb was played by O'Toole, but these were not regular occurrences. According to Bill C. Malone, this combination of instruments is a typical one of hillbilly groups of the 1920s in the United States although Malone notes the use of the accordion only in connection with Cajun hillbilly records.²⁰ Its use here underscores the regionality of the Newfoundland form of hillbilly music in the 1930s as manifest on the *Mellon*.

¹⁹Bob Lewis, "The Fantastic Communications Explosion," In J. R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, IV, 1967, p. 369; "The Irene B. Mellon Sailed out weekly..." in *Golden Age of CBN 640 St. John's, 1932-1982*, supplement to the *Evening Telegram*, 29 October 1982, p. 6A.

²⁰Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U. S. A.: A Fifty Year History* (Austin: U Texas P, 1968), p. 45.

Guest characters were not always acted by guests. As already mentioned many were acted by O'Toole. But from time to time guests would appear and they usually had some musical skill to add to that of the regulars.²¹ For instance Ted Coleman's brother Leonard appeared on the programme twice, once as an actor, but both times playing his banjo.²² As an actor Len Coleman played a waiter in a restaurant in South America and is said to have forgotten his lines.²³ Coleman's sister, Betty, also appeared in one of the two programmes in order to stepdance while her brother Len played banjo.²⁴

Other guests appeared from time to time on the programme. Throughout the scripts references are made to characters met on shore or even at sea, stowaways, officials, and livyers in the various ports they called into. While many of these characters were played by the regular actors such as Frank O'Toole, who was particularly apt at playing dialect characters, some were played by musically talented guest performers. One exception to this, a guest performer

²¹This system of drawing in other local musical talent by introducing them as visiting characters, has been used several times since the Mellon. For example, the successful radio dramatic series, *The Newfie Bullet*, aired on CBC's Newfoundland radio network, 1978-80, did exactly this. See the collection of scripts and recordings of this series, written by David Ross who also played the main character, MUNFLA 81-513. See also Peter Narváez, "The Newfie Bullet—The Nostalgic Use of Folklore," in P. Narváez and M. Laba, *Media Sense*, pp. 65-70.

²²Personal interview, Leonard Coleman, St. John's, 26 March 1986, MUNFLA Tape 86-088/CB440.

²³Pat DeBourke interview, 6 December 1983, MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236.

²⁴From evidence in the scripts, it appears that this programme was IBM #70 (20 April 1937) while the programme in which Len Coleman appeared with a speaking part in a South American restaurant was IBM #15 (10 May 1934).

who was not there because he could play a musical instrument, was Dr. John Grieve, a St. John's physician. Grieve portrayed a doctor from a large steamer who was hailed aboard the *Mellon* in order to treat Mac for a head injury suffered in an accident in the rigging.²⁵

Musicians

Jack Withers originated the idea for the series. He had sailed in a British Navy ship similar to the three-master *Irene B. Mellon* during the First World War and the experience remained with him all his life.²⁶ When he received the okay for the show from the station and the sponsor he approached his wife's brother, Pat DeBourke, who was working as a plumber at the time but who had some radio experience with a group of musical friends. The previous year, in 1933, DeBourke, Frank O'Toole, Ernest MacDonald, Ted Coleman and Billy Boyle had appeared on a local radio programme in which they competed for listeners' letters against another musical group. DeBourke's group lost the competition but the experience made them anxious to return to the medium of radio.²⁷ When Withers approached his young brother-in-law, DeBourke was prepared and eager.

²⁵Pat DeBourke, MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236. The accident occurs in IBM #12 and the doctor comes aboard in #13, 19, 26 April 1934. Dr. Grieve was an experienced radio "artiste" - he had participated, for example in the official opening of VONF a year and a half before: see, "Formal Opening of New Broadcasting Station," *Evening Telegram*, 14 November 1932, 14.

²⁶Ted Withers interview, 17 November 1983, MUNFLA tape C6956/83-236. See also Withers' interview on CBN radio, *Regional Roundup*, 6 January 1985, MUNFLA tape C7423/85-040.

²⁷Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983, MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236.

Patrick DeBourke was born in December 1911 in St. John's. His family owned a small shop on Forest Road, near the Penitentiary. He was taught music at school by Sister Mary Josephine French, an Irish nun.²⁸ He studied violin under her for three years at Mount Cashel, learning popular and traditional Irish tunes, but studying classical tunes and techniques as well. It was from her that DeBourke learned some of his most appreciated violin techniques, in particular tremolo, which he used to advantage in the *Irene B. Mellon*.²⁹

In 1927, when Pat was fifteen years old, he auditioned along with other local performers, with a travelling band of black musicians which was playing at the Prince's Rink in St. John's. At this point he had been taking his violin lessons for three years and he felt competent to go on a public stage with professional musicians. He played 'Take Me Out To The Ballgame' with the group and was liked so well by the audience that the other performers refused to follow him and he won the \$25 prize by default.³⁰

For at least a decade Pat DeBourke was being prepared for a musical career, practising the skills of performing in public, when his older brother-in-law asked him to join the proposed series on radio. Pat had assembled an informal band, those with whom he had already played on the radio contest. But upon

²⁸ Unrecorded interview 24 January 1985, field notes.

²⁹ Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983, Tape C8957/83-236.

³⁰ 'Take Me Out To The Ball Game' was a 1908 hit song written by Jack Norworth and Albert von Tilzer. See Jack Burton, *The Blue Book of Tin Pan Alley*, 2nd ed. (Watkins Glen, N. Y.: Century House, 1962), p. 298. It has been made popular several times since 1908.

hearing that he would have to speak into a microphone, the group's accordionist Billy Boyles backed out. He was used to playing publicly as a musician, but not as a performer in a wider sense. Hurdles such as this, however, must be passed by a musician who would go from a more private, anonymous tradition to a more public, star-like tradition or medium.³¹ The new medium of radio called upon musicians to be actors as well and Billy Boyles did not attempt to, or could not, make that transition.

Pat now had no accordionist and he started asking around, particularly in the area of St. John's in which he and his family lived. Jimmy Ring was an accordionist who lived in Quidi Vidi Village, not far from Pat's own neighbourhood, and his name was suggested. When Pat asked him he accepted.

For the most part, the group played more or less all together only when they were on the radio. Some individual members, however, played in different configurations for periodic or occasional live performances particularly during the part of the year when they were not on the air, approximately between June and November. Jim Ring and Pat DeBourke often played as a duo, billing themselves as being from the *Irene B. Mellon*. They sometimes played at small local dances, parties and such private affairs as weddings. Occasionally organisers of such affairs would telephone the radio station and ask for them by their characters'

³¹ Neil Rosenberg has outlined the different levels of expertise and reputation that musical performers move through in their developing careers. See, "Big Fish, Small Pond: Country Musicians and Their Markets", in P. Narváez and M. Laba, eds., *Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1988), pp. 149-166.

names: the Cook and Bosun.³² The range of their live performances was approximately the same as the range of their radio programme: part of the Avalon Peninsula, and a few other nearby parts of the Island. Mainly, however, they played near St. John's. The Master, Jack Withers, never played with the other members of the band outside the context of the radio programme. Neither did Frank O'Toole (Willie). The remaining members of the *Mellon* group, Ted Coleman and Ern MacDonald, along with Ted's brother Len, formed another musical ensemble known as the Mountaineers.³³ These three were members of the junior affiliate of the men's service organisation, the Elks, which was known as the Antlers Club. The Mountaineers played quite frequently at Antlers meetings, held on Sunday nights on Water Street West in St. John's. On one occasion, 10 May 1936, they played at a benefit "Musical," for a young girl who had gone astray for several days on the Heart's Content Barrens and who had required medical treatment when found.³⁴

Of the five regular musicians in the *Mellon* band (Ring, MacDonald, O'Toole, DeBourke and Coleman) only Ring was still playing in the 1980s.³⁵ For

³²DeBourke, MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236.

³³Unrecorded interviews with Ted and Frankie Coleman, 18 November 1984, and Len Coleman, 26 March 1986. The choice of the name "Mountaineers" reflected their performance of hillbilly music.

³⁴Michael Harrington, "Offbeat History: Lucy Harris, Babe in the Woods", *Evening Telegram*, 1 April 1985, p. 8.

³⁵Ted Coleman died in the autumn of 1985.

(a time all of them quit playing. Ring took it up in his retirement again and now has a popular band called the Quidi Vidi Ceili Band which plays at retirement homes, benefit concerts and occasionally at local bars.³⁶ His son began a charter business on a boat named for Jim Ring, the *Skipper Ring*, in 1986 and Jim Ring's group provided music for customers on charter trips.³⁷ Ring was responsible for the brief revival of a band in part based on the *Mellon* band, the Kitty Vitty Minstrels, in the early 1970s. This band recorded an album which included some of the songs which they had done over thirty years before on the radio. Included in that band was singer and fiddler Pat DeBourke.³⁸

Audience

The *Irene B. Mellon* radio programme commenced broadcasting in early 1934 on radio station VOGY, a small low-powered station owned and operated by A.E. "Frank" Wood and Bob Monroe.³⁹ With a power of just one hundred watts, the coverage of VOGY could not have been a great deal more than the local St. John's area in daytime. At night it could be heard reliably

³⁶ The band played, for instance at a concert in the H. M. Penitentiary 2 April 1986; personal communication, 7 April 1986, with Ian MacKinnon who performed at the same penitentiary concert. It played regularly on Sunday afternoons in April 1986 at "Greensleeves," a downtown St. John's bar; advertisements in *Evening Telegram*, Saturday 6 April and 13 April 1986.

³⁷ "A Tune to Pass the Time," *Evening Telegram*, 28 May 1986, 18.

³⁸ Kitty Vitty Minstrels, *The Cliffs of Baccalieu*, Audat 477-9033.

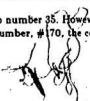
³⁹ Oscar Hierlihy, personal interview, 11 October 1983, MUNFLA tape C6947/83-236; Ernest Ash, "The Story of Radio in Newfoundland," in J. R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, I, 1937, pp. 339 - 350; "Local Station VOGY Opening," *Evening Telegram*, 12 September 1932, 6; telephone interview with Jim Ring, 28 November 1983, fieldnotes, p. 32.

around the Avalon Peninsula and even across the Island of Newfoundland.⁴⁰ The station was in a converted hotel room on the sixth (top) floor of the Newfoundland Hotel and the station's transmitting antenna was on the roof of the Hotel.

The programme remained on VOGY until the middle of the second season; its last programme on that station was #31, 18 January 1935. There was no programme then for over a month. Episode #32 finally appeared on station VONF on 1 March 1935. The script for that show has the date 22 February typed on the title page, but that date is crossed off and 1 March written in by hand. Presumably it had been planned to resume broadcasts on 22 February, but it was postponed a week. Ten programmes were aired during the following two months. The last show that season was number 42 which aired on 3 May 1935.⁴¹ The programme was off the air for six months following #42 and in December of that year episode #43 was aired on VONF. The day of the month for this programme is not given. Radio station VONF was owned by a subsidiary of the Avalon Telephone Company and like VOGY came on the air in 1932. Sometime in 1935, probably around the time when the Mellon moved from the one to the other, the Telephone Company bought out VOGY, merging the two stations into

⁴⁰ "Broadcasting Riddle," *Observer's Weekly*, 4:7 (27 August 1935), 5 notes that the St John's stations, including VOGY which had only recently been absorbed into VONF, could be heard clearly in many parts of the Island, but not at all in others.

⁴¹ There was no number 35. However there were two different scripts numbered #40, making the last episode number, #170, the correct total number of scripts.



what was normally known as "VONF and VOGY". VOGY had better studio facilities at the Hotel than did VONF at its McBride's Hill venue. After the merger the new combined station operated out of the Hotel.⁴² The VONF scripts state that they were performed at the McBride's Hill studio of VONF, which seems to indicate that the merger was not yet complete. The new combined station did not continue carrying the series. This may have been due to lack of sponsorship or lack of interest at the station.⁴³ By late 1935 or early 1936 VONF was the only commercial station on the air and had been negotiating for some time with the Commission of Government to ensure that it retained that monopoly.⁴⁴

Operation of VONF was more or less controlled by two men: Joseph L. Butler and William F. Galgay. Galgay was educated by Irish Christian Brothers in St John's and in the United States, where he trained to be a teacher. In 1922, at the age of sixteen he began teaching in Newfoundland and continued until 1929, when he withdrew from the Christian Brothers and learned the trade of wiring theatres for sound. He was employed in this matter by Northern Electric Company of Canada and travelled widely in central Canada as well as

⁴²Oscar Hierlihy interview, 11 October 1983, MUNFLA tape C8947/83-236.

⁴³Pat DeBourke remembers the period as one in which the show lacked a sponsor: tape 86-088/C8439.

⁴⁴H. O'Halloran's report to the Commission of Government on the state of broadcasting, 27 September 1934: PANL GN 38 57-1-1, file 1. I am indebted to Jeff Webb for showing me this document.

Newfoundland modernizing cinema facilities.⁴⁵ Through this work he became known at the Avalon Telephone Company whose subsidiary, the Dominion Broadcasting Company, owned VONF. When that station began operations, he was hired as Studio Director and Head Announcer.⁴⁶ He remained with VONF through three owners: the Telephone Company, the national Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland and finally, when the station was renamed CBN, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. When he died in 1966 he was Regional Director of the CBC in Newfoundland.⁴⁷ Galgay's interests in radio were as a medium of education. The *Evening Telegram* story which announced the opening of VONF stated that only

The highest class of entertainment procurable in the country will be provided and to this end the co-operation has been obtained of such artistes as Mr. D.M.Morgan, organist of the C. of E. Cathedral, Dr. John Grieve, Mr. Fred Emerson, Mrs. R. B. Job (nee Mrs. Emily Warren), Miss K. Howley and Miss Elsie Tait. Programmes consisting of organ recitals, symphonic recordings, vocal and instrumental solos etc., have been arranged and will be given at regular intervals.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ "Regional CBC Director ... W.F. Galgay dies," *Evening Telegram*, 16 August 1966, 3.

⁴⁶ "Formal Opening of New Broadcasting Station," *Evening Telegram*, 14 November 1932, 14. See also the VONF logbook for 1935-36, CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 128.

⁴⁷ "Regional CBC Director ... W.F. Galgay dies," *Evening Telegram*, 16 August 1966, 3.

⁴⁸ "Formal Opening of New Broadcasting Station," *Evening Telegram*, 14 November 1932, p. 14. Galgay probably wrote this newspaper article, or the press release which formed its basis. The evidence for this is slight but convincing: he was a former teacher, a well-spoken and literate man who, being Station Director, would have been responsible for preparing a press release and this seems enough evidence. However, the curious placement of his name at the very end of the article in a short sentence, "The studio director will be W.F. Galgay," is typical of his modesty.

Galgay clearly had high views of the needs of the community and the responsibilities of radio. It was under his direction that school broadcasts began in Newfoundland at the Broadcasting Corporation's Corner Brook station in 1943.⁴⁹ He wanted radio to raise the cultural standards of the community. In drama his preference was legitimate theatre: in the 1950s and 1960s he was a Director of the Dominion Drama Festival Committee in Newfoundland.⁵⁰ The *Irene B. Mellon* was hardly legitimate theatre of the air and it is tempting to speculate on the role which Galgay had in the temporary demise of the *Irene B. Mellon* in late 1935. No evidence exists, however, to suggest that he did want it off the air.

In any case, business prospects for private radio looked good enough in 1936 that Galgay's co-worker at VONF, Joseph Butler, arranged to have a transmitter shipped to him. In October of that year, having left VONF, he inaugurated a new competing station before the Commission of Government finalised plans to grant a monopoly of broadcasting to the Telephone Company. Despite official policies against the encouragement of private radio in Newfoundland, Butler's station, VOCM, remained on the air and in the 1980s is

⁴⁹CNS Galgay Papers, Folder 92; Dick O'Brien, personal communication, 30 April 1986.

⁵⁰"St. John's Players Win Four Awards At Festival" *Evening Telegram*, 12 April 1965, 3. See also the tribute paid to him by the man who succeeded him as Chairman of the Newfoundland Drama Festival Society, John Perlie, "Funeral Thursday for W.F. Galgay", *Evening Telegram*, 17 August 1966, 4.

part of the largest private network in the Province.⁵¹ VOCM signed on the evening of 15 October 1936 and the *Irene B. Mellon* band played at the official opening. Four days later, episode #44 was aired and except for summer breaks the programme remained a regular weekly offering of the station until the final broadcast in April 1941. Of the 170 episodes aired during its entire run, 127 were broadcast from VOCM:

VOCM began as a very low-power station in St. John's, broadcasting from its studio and transmitter on Parade Street. Much of its initial equipment was homemade, but as time passed the station added more professional gear. The first antenna was a wire strung from the studio building to a telephone pole. Later a one-hundred foot steel mast was erected and this served for fourteen years until Butler moved his transmitter to Kenmount Hill in 1950.⁵² In its earliest days VOCM was probably lucky to have an audience which included all of St. John's. It signed on with a power of only 250 watts.⁵³ According to Ern MacDonald, one of the *Mellon* crew, Jack Withers used to jokingly curse the range of the transmitter:

⁵¹ Personal interview, Joseph V. Butler, 18 October 1984, MUNFLA tape C7430/85-040.

⁵² Joseph V. Butler, 18 October 1984, MUNFLA tape C7430/85-040. This tower was sold in 1950 to radio station VOAR who erected it next to their building on Merrymeeting Road. It served them until January 1985 when a windstorm shifted its bearings, cracking a base insulator and it had to be removed. Telephone conversation with Darroll Fillier of VOAR, 19 May 1985.

⁵³ Bob Lewis, "The Fantastic Communications Explosion," in J. R. Smallwood, ed, *The Book Of Newfoundland*, IV (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1967); p. 369.

[He] used to be browned off! *Crumby, bloody, two-bit station! We only get as far as Bowering Park!* Jack used to get really, really browned off. Oh yeah. *We couldn't get as far as Bowering Park! Yeah. Cripes.*⁵⁴

It was something of an exaggeration that the signal could not get out to Bowering Park, which is in the West End of St. John's. With the hundred-foot mast and its power increase to 1000 watts, VOCM was probably covering most of the Avalon Peninsula and parts of Eastern Newfoundland into Bonavista Bay.⁵⁵ Particularly outside St. John's, the atmosphere was quite a bit quieter than today because electrical mains had not spread so widely and there were fewer electrical appliances to produce noise. As a result, a weak station such as VOCM was probably heard with greater ease than a similarly powered station today would be.

The *Irene B. Mellon*, then, never had an audience which was reliably much larger than those people living on the Avalon Peninsula. No doubt fishermen and others on board vessels equipped with radios also listened when they were able; St. John's is peculiarly positioned to enable stations to broadcast with ease to a large part of the North Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁶ One fan would regularly

⁵⁴Personal interview, Ern MacDonald, 2 February 1985, MUNFLA tape C7516/85-040.

⁵⁵Joseph V. Butler, MUNFLA tape C7430/85-040. See also Sir C. G. Graves, *Report on Broadcasting in Newfoundland, 1935*, PRO XC/A/023065 - D035/505-N1071/12.

⁵⁶This was put to great advantage during the Second World War for trans-Atlantic flights at night. Flights from Europe would home in on VONF's strong signal: interview Melvin Rowe, 14 November 1983, MUNFLA tape C6954/83-236.

write personally to Pat DeBourke from St. Mary's Bay to request songs.⁵⁷ In fact, reception was regular enough for there to be fans of the programme as far away as Trepassey on the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula and Chapel's Cove, Conception Bay.⁵⁸

The *Mellon's* audience, at least in its earlier seasons, was called upon to show interest in the series by phoning and writing the radio station. Later the sponsors became active in having the audience react to the programme, offering gifts to those who enclosed product labels with their letters. Jack Withers himself called on his listeners to aid the show. At the end of episode #6 he had the station announcer read a notice as follows:

We have had many requests for the crew of the Irene B. Mellon to sing some of the old time local songs. Apparently they haven't the words of many of them aboard the schooner and it seems to be rather difficult to find many in the City. Maybe some of our outport listeners who are interested in following the Irene B. on her voyage, have the words of some of these songs. If they would like to hear them sung by the crew, send them to V.O.G.Y. and they will transmit them to the boys aboard the Irene B. (IBM #6[iii], 8 March 1934, p. 9 verso)

This was the only time that the crew asked for songs, but other times the listeners were entreated to show their interest by writing the station, particularly near the ends of seasons when the future of the series was perhaps in doubt.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Personal interview, Pat DeBourke, 11 April 1986, MUNFLA Tape 86-088/C8430.

⁵⁸MUNFLA mss 75-134, p. 25; 83-250, p. 3; and 81-343.

⁵⁹For example IBM #41, 26 April 1935, pp. 25-26. This show was the second last one of the season. This was also tried after the last programme of the 1934 season, IBM #23, 5 July 1934, p. 14.

One effort to engage the audience, and to test the size of it, was a contest announced at the end of an episode in mid-season 1936, about a month after the first mention of an Imperial Tobacco Company product and presumably after the beginning of that company's sponsorship. In that programme Rose disappeared, apparently kidnapped. At the end of the programme the announcer offered prizes to listeners who correctly answered the question, "What's happened to Rose?" The address given for letters was that of the Imperial Tobacco Company and the prizes were products of that company. In a CBC radio interview by Peter Miller of CBN *Morning Show*, Ted Withers recalled his father carrying out such a test, perhaps the same one:

PM: So this was a programme that was under commercial sponsorship?

TW: Yes Imperial Tobacco Company sponsored it for all that time. An aside to it was that at one time, after they had sponsored it for, I think, about three years, they were beginning to wonder whether indeed anybody out there was listening to it at all, whether it had any audience at all. [LAUGHS.] So they wanted what they called a "mail call" and asked Dad if he would build into it somewhere a request for mail. Well, you know, Dad said, "I don't want to put in a blunt 'Write us please and let us know if you want to hear this programme again.'" So what he did, in the middle of a thirty minute script he dropped in two lines: one which said that, "Boy, it's awfully lonely out here, you know. Wouldn't it be nice if we could get some letters from shore?" [PM: Right.] They only got eight hundred that first week. Which in those days--

PM: Eight hundred in the first week!⁶⁰

⁶⁰Regional Roundup, 6 January 1985, MUNFLA tape C7423/85-040

The Irene B. Mellon in Folklore

The *Irene B. Mellon* was a sustained success in the radio culture of 1930s Newfoundland because it resonated with positive aspects of the culture of urban and rural Newfoundlanders of that time. The *Mellon* experience became a part of the folkloric heritage of the performers and radio listeners alike. One of the ways in which the *Mellon* crew was influenced by their performing experience was in their long-standing nicknames. More than forty years after the last *Mellon* show, Jim Ring and Pat DeBourke still refer to each other as "Cook" and "Bos" whenever they meet.⁶¹

The shared experiences of the listening audience also affected regional folklore. Fans gathered in local groups to listen to the show each week. Occasionally, this customary effort was said to reach a level of fanaticism which bordered on violence and sometimes became violent:

Radios weren't all that common in those days, but wherever there was a radio, I guarantee you, that at eight o'clock on a Tuesday night the *Irene B. Mellon* was on that radio. The story is told of a small place, I'm not sure if it was Flatrock, Pouch Cove, Bauline or Torbay, but down in that area somewhere. The community had two radios in it. And on Tuesday night everybody in the community turned up at one or the other of those houses, listening to the *Mellon*. A fella was there half drunk and he was carrying on and it came eight o'clock. And the intro to the programme was six bells. Or eight bells. Again, my memory fails me but, "Ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding," a marlin spike hitting, you know. And well, when that sound was heard, "That's it now, stop. No more racket." This fella, half drunk, kept on. And the owner of the house just clobbered him. Threw him out through the door. Yep.

⁶¹Pat DeBourke interview C6957/83-236.

"You're welcome," he said. "But you got to keep quiet." Got to hear every single word. (C6956/83-236)

Anecdotes are told of listeners who believed that the programme was real, that there really was a ship with that name. For instance in episode #3, 8 February, 1934, the ship was about to enter the St. John's Harbour in a thick snowfall. Allegedly, listeners drove to the waterfront to shine their headlights in an effort to help the ship make its way in. Ted Withers remembers this credibility of the show:

Well, I'll tell you how real this was to people, that people got in their cars when they heard the programme and the problems the vessel was confronted with not being able to find the entrance to the Narrows. They went up on Signal Hill with the cars pointed out to sea with headlights on, to see if they could give the vessel some indication of where the land was. And it was reported that two policemen at the Police Station who used to patrol the harbour then in a boat, they got aboard and went out the Narrows looking for them!⁶²

When one programme ended with the *Mellon* apparently about to be shipwrecked, nuns are said to have led their schoolchildren in prayer for the crew's safety the following day.⁶³ In mid-February 1937 the actor Marie Withers had a bad cold but the script for the 16 February show called for her to sing. A handwritten note in the script changes the plan, having her cough, someone refer to her cold, and Pat sing her song (*IBM #60*, p. 9). A flood of letters arrived

⁶² Interviewed by Peter Miller for *CBN Morning Show*, aired on *Regional Roundup*, 6 January 1985; MUNFLA tape C7423/85-040.

⁶³ Len Coleman, 26 March 1986, unrecorded portion of interview, in fieldnotes; Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983, C6957/83-236.

during the following week from concerned listeners suggesting various remedies for "Rose" to take for her cold. Some even sent bottles of medicine.⁶⁴

One particular anecdote which took the form of a rumour is an example of "meta-folklore", a term used to describe expressions of folk understandings of folklore or an awareness of folklore which goes beyond simple, unselfconscious use of the item.⁶⁵ A rumour circulated that the Germans believed either the story that a U-Boat had been sunk by the *Mellon* or that enough people believed it to require an official denial. As already noted, their denial came through one of the official propaganda voices of Nazi Germany, Lord HaHa.⁶⁶ This was a source of some glee to fans of the *Mellon*. The cultural power of such a rumour is raised by the esoteric nature of the truth and the fact that the truth could not be known simply from listening to the programme. A couple of years before, the famous Orson Welles dramatisation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* was said to have induced near-panic in parts of the United States. Here the cruel joke is played on an out-group. The cultural power of the the rumour is raised topically by the fact the out-group is the enemy in wartime.

This of course is an example of the *Mellon* being synchronically a part of the folklore of its audience. But today it has become part of diachronic lore,

⁶⁴Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983, C6957/83-236; Ted Withers, 17 November 1983, unrecorded portion of interview; in fieldnotes.

⁶⁵Alán Duñes, "Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism," *The Monist*, 50:4 (1966); rpt. in Jan Harold Brunvand, ed., *Readings in American Folklore*, Norton, New York, 1979, pp. 404-415.

⁶⁶See p. 132, above.

specifically the oral folk history of broadcasting. The *Mellon* is one of the examples of local radio production which are included in most narratives and other stories pertaining to the history of radio in Newfoundland. As such it is part of the folk history of that topic. In an interview about radio programming in St. John's in the 1930s, Aubrey MacDonald, who was never connected in any way to the *Irene B. Mellon*, said about radio station VOCM:

there was [a] famous show on that radio station called the *Irene B. Mellon*. It was a ship, captain, crew, and it was beautifully done. And [Ted] Withers' father was a mariner of that ship, I remember. . . . It was on weekly. [PH: Was it a one hour show?] It was a half an hour show and it depicted a ship, you know, and all the different characters, the first mate and the captain, and they had this wonderful Newfoundland accent. You know, it was a famed show. As a matter of fact, I don't know if there was any tape of that. If there was ever a tape of that you should get it and listen to it. Because it's a part of the history of Newfoundland. It was a famous show. [C6948/83-236]

This inclusion of the name in the folk memory of Newfoundlanders may have been behind the use of the name "Irene B. Mellon" by a group of rock musicians in the late 1960s or early 1970s when a resurgent interest in Newfoundland cultural heritage was getting underway. The band played current rock hits, rather than the blend of traditional and Irish stage music which the first *Mellon* band played and was popular for a short time at weddings and occasional bar engagements.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Personal information, Michael Kearney, 20 March 1986; Pat DeBourke, 11 April 1986, MUNFLA Tape 86-088/C8439.

Elite Culture, Popular Culture and Folklore in the Irene B. Mellon

Like folklore, popular culture is a widely encompassing term. It includes the world around us in a very literal sense.⁶⁸ Advertising, news, fashion, fads and all other cultural products disseminated by the anonymous media are all popular culture. Popular culture materials are those disseminated by means other than face-to-face small groups. The *Irene B. Mellon* itself was popular culture because it was produced through the efforts of a small number of persons and transmitted through the medium of radio to a wide, anonymous audience. At the same time, the series was composed of combinations of cultural elements which in varying degrees were reflective of folk, popular and elite cultures.

Because of the kinds of workaday lifestyles that were presented on the programme, reflections of folklore were more common than elite culture. This is simply to say that men on board a three-masted schooner are more likely to sing folksongs than, say, operatic arias. But in the modern world, which the *Mellon* was certainly part of, individuals come into contact with aspects of all levels of culture.⁶⁹ The *Mellon*, for the sake of realism and credibility, moved in the same world as its audience, using items from popular and high culture to make the stories more realistic. A few examples of items of popular culture which were

⁶⁸Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture - The World Around Us," in Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weiser and John L. Wright, eds., *The Popular Culture Reader* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1978), pp. 12-18.

⁶⁹Herbert Gans suggests that a better way of viewing these different forms of culture is to call them "taste cultures" rather than levels. *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

used in the series is sufficient to show their role in the cultural backdrop of the dramatic presentation.

Eddie Cantor was a very popular radio entertainer in the early 1930s. He was a singer who first appeared on network radio in the United States in early 1931 and who had his own series by September of that year. All through the 1930s his programmes had "phenomenally high ratings" and could easily be heard in Newfoundland through the shortwave outlets of the NBC network.⁷⁰ In an episode of the *Mellon* one character says to another as an ironic expression of disbelief, "Yes, and I'm Eddie Cantor!" The listener easily recognises this kind of conversation as familiar because it is a folk form of talk to draw into conversation items from the prevailing culture. Here we see an interlinked series of cultural forms: within the popular culture item of the *Irene B. Mellon* is a form of folklore (hyperbolic irony) which itself consists of a reference to another popular cultural item (Eddie Cantor).

For part of one season the Cook kept "Popeye", a pet monkey named for "Popeye the sailor man".⁷¹ "Popeye" was a syndicated cartoon character whose popularity was increased in the mid-1930s by a radio series on the American networks. Knowledge of the character was widespread yet still fairly

⁷⁰ John Dunning, *Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio 1925-1976* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1976), pp. 178-181. In January 1933 Cantor was estimated to have a 58.6% share of the radio audience in the United States during his airtime, Sunday evening at 8 pm. Harrison B. Summers, ed., *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926-56* (New York: Arno, 1971), p. 31.

⁷¹ *IBM* #77, 14, December 1937, p. 14.

novel at the time.⁷²

The use of situations and scenes which were familiar to the listener through the various organs of the mass media is evident throughout the series. A commercially produced tobacco is an item of popular culture as home-grown tobacco is not. In almost every second programme the listener heard one or a few characters extoll the virtues of the products of the Imperial Tobacco Company. Although in real life people rarely extoll virtues of brand-name products, the use of local products names in a mass media production brought the story home, adding an extra layer of credibility to it.

Likewise the international situations depicted on the *Mellon* such as the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, national tensions in European colonial possessions in Africa and American gangsterism had all received extensive coverage in the popular media and were transformed or "mass-mediated" into products of popular culture.⁷³ From the receiver's (listener's) point of view, whatever comes from the media is available culture for use. When the three-masted schooner, the *Irene B. Mellon*, entered war zones, as radio news

⁷²The cartoon was syndicated by King Features Syndicate from 1926 on. A thrice weekly radio programme based on the cartoon began on NBC in September 1935, changing to CBS in August 1936: John Dunning, *Tune In Yesterday*, p. 486. Popeye has also been popular in the lore of children: see Peter and Iona Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959), p. 112.

⁷³Michael Real, *Mass-Mediated Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 14.

correspondents did for the first time during the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁴ Withers was using local perceptions of the real world to dramatic advantage, injecting regional items into a larger popular culture frame.

Like the average Newfoundlander, the crew members of the *Mellon* occasionally encountered high culture. From time to time a recitation of a poem by an established poet would be performed on the programme. The performance of recited poetry, and sometimes prose pieces, like the singing of songs, is a common folkloric activity in Newfoundland. Wilfred Wareham points out that traditionally one of the most important contexts of monologue recitation has been the forecabin of fishing boats and schooners. He also notes that many Newfoundland recitations are from sources such as published poetry collections.⁷⁵ In particular Wareham notes the traditional adaptations of the poetry of Robert W. Service. This adaptation of poetry for traditional recitation was also apparent in the performances on the *Irene B. Mellon*. For instance, John Masefield's poem "Sea Fever" was adapted and read. Although this can be seen as an example of what Michael Real calls "mass mediation", more significantly it is an example of the adaptive technique of folk performers in choosing materials for their

⁷⁴David Holbrook Culbert, *News For Everyman: Radio and Foreign Affairs in Thirties America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 72.

⁷⁵Wilfred W. Wareham, "The Monologue in Newfoundland Folk Culture", in *The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, II (St. John's: NBP, 1984), pp. 252-262. On the recitation tradition in Great Britain, see Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Monologue Performance in Great Britain," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 40 (1976), 7-29. As Wareham points out, many of Goldstein's comments can be applied to the Newfoundland tradition as well.

repertoires. In the case of "Sea Fever" the adaptation was minor. The reciter was the little girl Rose who, once again, was being threatened with being put ashore never to go to sea again. She began the poem with "I wanta go down to the sea again." The original begins with "I must down to the sea again."⁷⁶ Only the first line of the poem is given in the script for this programme.

Another of Masfield's poems, "The Turn Of The Tide," which takes the form of the last will and testament of a dying sailor, was also adapted. In the original the first line is, "An' Bill can have my seaboots, Nigger Jim can have my knife." Withers used this poem in the *Mellon* by having the character Willie recite it when he thinks he is about to die from a tropical disease (IBM #113, 22 February 1939, pp. 11-12). Unlike all other poems and songs used in the series, Withers typed his adaptation of this poem into the script. The changes are small and few in number. In line one the adaptation reads, "Mac can 'ave me seaboots an' the Cook can 'ave me knife." Line three of the original reads, "The Lord can take my body" while the adaptation, perhaps wary of accusations of blasphemy, says that "Fate can take my body."

Poetry, then more than now, formed an important part of the stock in trade for newspaper publishers. Although there were syndicated poets in the 1930s whose poetry appeared in many newspapers, some editors culled poems from their own reading which they thought might be appreciated by their readers.

⁷⁶ IBM #99, p. 13. The earliest printed versions of Masfield's poem do not have the verb "go" in the first line; however, later versions do. See John Masfield, *Salt Water Poems and Ballads* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 55.

Masefield's poem "Sea Fever" in fact turned up in a weekly newsmagazine published in St. John's in early 1934 with the editorial comment that it "should find an echo in the hearts of all Newfoundlanders."⁷⁷ No doubt the editor recognised the traditional aesthetics of the region which were bolstered by its vital ballad and monologue traditions. Without obscuring the traditional nature of the performance of such a poem, it is difficult not to see the poem as a product of popular culture. Since there were at least two Masefield poems used in the series, and perhaps more (many of the recitations are unnamed), it seems likely that Withers' source was one of the many popular editions of Masefield's work. Nonetheless, the fact that one of these had been printed in a local weekly paper may have suggested to him the potential for using the poem.

Whatever its source, the poem became a product of popular culture by its sheer inclusion in the programme. It is possible that such poems were recited on the programme and subsequently became a part of the repertoires of some listeners who, in small group "folk" settings, were monologists themselves. If this were the case, it may be speculated that items of elite culture (albeit influenced in their radio production by folk cultural aesthetics) were transmitted by the popular media, transformed by that process into a form of popular culture, and finally were learned by folk performers who, in small group contexts, turned them into items of folk culture. Pat DeBourke remembers that listeners to the programme

⁷⁷ *Observer's Weekly* 1:6 (24 February 1934), p. 8.

often wrote the radio station asking for repeat performances of songs.⁷⁸ Likely this was done in many cases to capture the words for their own performance. No doubt this also occurred with monologues.

Another product of elite culture on the programme was the performance of local violinist Maurice Wilansky who appeared for one show. The character he played seemed to be an afterthought: he appeared near the end of one programme and never reappeared again. His character was a stowaway named "Maurice" who played a number of violin tunes.⁷⁹ Pat DeBourke said of this occasion

Maurice Wilansky came on . . . Maurice used to play the classic stuff. Yeah he used to play the violin and we had him on as a guest. (C8439/86-088)

DeBourke remembered Wilansky got "kind of nervy" about performing on the radio and that this mike-shyness was perhaps a reason for his not returning.

The *Irene B. Mellon* series succeeded in being a lifelike representation of a Newfoundland schooner because Withers included in the programmes many items which were familiar to his listeners. The texture of the shows was founded in the folk speech of the characters, not only in the form of local phonology and syntax, but also in the deliberate use of lexical items and collocations. More important than using linguistic items which indeed are peculiar to

⁷⁸Pat DeBourke, 11 April 1986, MUNFLA tape C8439/86-088.

⁷⁹IBM #9, 29 March 1934, p. 12.

Newfoundlanders, is the use of linguistic items which appear to Newfoundlanders to be Newfoundland English. In the following excerpt we find several examples of non-standard English congruent with Newfoundland English. Some examples of non-standardisms below are the use of "sang" as a preterite form by both speakers, one of whom varies to "sang" as well; the explicit "-in'" ending on continuous verbs; the use of the "-s" on a verb with a plural subject ("the rats is all over her"). Respectively these exemplify morphological, phonological and syntactic differences from standard English. Although not present in this extract, lexical examples of Newfoundland English were also used.

Mate: Cook, take down the sidelights and bring em in here. We won't be needin' em tonight.

Cook: Not goin' to be underweigh eh sir.

Mate: No. And don't leave em lit. That's why I'm takin' em down, to save oil.

Cook: No sir I wouldn't do that.

Mate: You did once before. (PAUSE) Have you got a bite to eat there Cook? I'm kinda peckish. A cake of hardtack or somethin'.

Cook: Just over your head there in that box. There's a few buns sir. They might be a little stale though.

Mate: I don't mind that. (PAUSE AS MATE REACHES INTO BOX) Oh.

Cook: Lookout sir I forgot there's a trap in there. Lookout. (PAUSE) You didn't get your hand into it sir.

Mate: No, but no thanks to you.

Cook: But I sang out sir.

Mate: Yes. After I had me hand in the box you sang out. The only reason I didn't get caught is this. (PAUSE AS MATE HAULS RAT IN TRAP OUT OF BOX)

Cook: There's a rat in it.

Mate: And a good job for you. If I had got my fingers in that trap it's be a sorry day for you, let me tell you... You can thank that rat that you ain't got a punched face now.

Cook: But I sang out sir.

Mate: You gotta sing out earlier, unless you want your face pushed. Remember that. Here take this rat and dump it over the side.

Cook: Ain't he a beauty sir. (PAUSE) You can get a bun now, there ain't any more traps in that box sir.

Mate: I think I'll have a cake of hardtack instead. I ain't keen on eatin' after rats. And can't you keep things we eat clear of rats?

Cook: It's kinda hard sir, when the rats is all over her.

The Irene B. Mellon was a medium of folk performance and, as such, the scripts of the series may be read as a folkloric collection. Jack Withers, in an effort to impart believable attributes to his characters and situations, observed folkloric events and items in the environment around him and included many of them in his programmes. Withers was not collecting folklore for any academic purpose—he was writing radio drama and wanted to make it as interesting and saleable as possible. To do this he used items of folklore and he built contexts around them, contexts which ushered listeners into worlds they could relate to. Keeping in mind that the contexts which Withers built were fictional, as indeed the entire frame of the series was, we can still recognise the folkloric value of his legacy of scripts. Whatever his intent, the result is a large body of folklore gathered together in a way which is less self-conscious than other collections of the day.⁸⁰ Withers was not trying to convince foreigners or the literati of the picturesqueness of Newfoundland culture; he was trying to reach average Newfoundlanders with fictional stories which, through the use of folklore, would be understood as being essentially about themselves.

⁸⁰ An example of these is P. K. Devine, *Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland In Old Words, Phrases and Expressions, Their Origin and Meaning* (St. John's: Robinson, 1937); somewhat later, but in the same vein is L. E. F. English's series of editions of *Historic Newfoundland*, originally published in 1955, but reprinted and updated frequently since then, most recently in 1984 as *Historic Newfoundland and Labrador*, 17th edition (St. John's: Newfoundland Division of Tourism Development, 1984).

Since song was the most important cultural component of the series from the point of view of entertainment, what follows is an index of song titles and fragments found in the scripts of the *Irene B. Mellon* with annotation and discussion. Not every song which was sung on the show is noted in the scripts. More often than not the script simply directs, "Rose sings," or the like. However, in almost a hundred and fifty cases we are told the name of a song sung, or we are given some information which makes it possible to track down what song it was. Recitations are included here as well as songs.

The process of searching for texts on the basis of titles may appear to be the opposite work order of the folksong scholar who usually begins with a text and, using title and first line indexes, searches out cognate versions. However, it is not very different when one considers that it is not only the text which is important to modern folkloristics. In the past decades folklorists have become interested in the processes which lead to folkloric expression. Here we see the repertoire of a musical group in the 1930s and early '40s and from that repertoire we can make some suppositions about their sources and influences. In the study of Newfoundland folksongs, the histories of certain songs have remained hazy. Some of these histories are illuminated by the songs' inclusion in the *Mellon* repertoire.

Dundes pointed the way a quarter century ago to a method of folkloristic analysis which could take into account whether or not one dealt with items in semantic and structural isolation or tried to abstract from the item to a

psychologically meaningful construct which, through a more powerful mode of analysis, might show more meaning. Later writers have taken this distinction to mean whether one is talking of the categories of the analyst, or those of the traditional users of the material at hand, the "outsider" versus the "insider".⁸¹ Although this is a less powerful use of the distinction, it is a useful one and one which is needed in folkloristics.

Dundes calls the first of these "etic" analysis and the second "emic". Both these terms derive from from linguistic usage in such terms as "phonetic" and "phonemic". His immediate source was Kenneth Pike's 1954 work, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*.⁸² It was Pike who extracted the suffixes "-etic" and "-emic" and turned them into adjectives.⁸³ The songs in the following index can be categorised at least two different ways, which we might label "etic" and "emic". The first is the analytic way in which folklorists categorise songs: into Child ballads, British broadsides, native American broadsides and local songs. This analytic system is an outsiders' construct and therefore to be thought of as "etic."

⁸¹Larry Danielson, "The Folklorist, the oral historian and local history," in David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An interdisciplinary Anthology*, American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, 1982, pp. 177-188, particularly footnote 4, pp. 186-7.

⁸²Glendale, 1954. This work was one of the last great works of structural linguistics in North America because that school was soon superseded by the transformational-generative school and its many progeny. It is ironic that structuralism was imported into folkloristics almost exactly at the time that such "surface" analyses were being dismissed in linguistics.

⁸³Alan Dundes, "From Etic To Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales," *JAF* 75 (1962), 95-105.

We have here no songs which are undoubtedly Child ballads, nor any which appear to be broadsides of British origin. Both these statements, however, must be taken as suppositions based only on titles: presumably songs of both types may have been included under titles other than the standard ones. At least two songs of those collected by G. Malcolm Laws as "native American broadside ballads" are included here: "The Dying Cowboy" (Laws B2), indexed here under its usual local title, "Bury Me Not On the Lone Prairie"; and "When The Work's All Done This Fall" (Laws B3). Of the songs here which can be traced, only seventeen are undoubtedly of local origin or substantial local development. This might seem to support Edith Fowke's contention that less than 20% of Newfoundland folksongs are of local composition.⁸⁴ Fowke, however, views the vast majority of songs in the Newfoundland repertoire as being of European origin. The vast majority of songs in this corpus are of popular, North American origin. At least half a dozen are standard "Tin Pan Alley" compositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Norm Cohen has shown the importance of Tin Pan Alley to the folk repertoire elsewhere in North America and this corpus underlines his findings.⁸⁵

Another popular source of songs for the *Irene B. Mellon*, and perhaps the largest single source, is early country music, usually referred to in the scripts

⁸⁴Edith Fowke, "Notes," in Kenneth Peacock, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, Pigeon Inlet Productions, PP7319, longplay record, 1983.

⁸⁵"Tin Pan Alley's Contribution to Folk Music," *Western Folklore*, 29 (1970), 9-20.

by its more common name before the Second World War, "hillbilly music."⁸⁶

Like blues songs, a popular music form with which early country music had much in common, the ultimate source of many hillbilly songs was traditional. It is difficult to know the immediate source of all the songs listed below. Many broadsides probably found their way into the repertoires of local popular musicians like the *Irene B. Mellon* band through country records and broadcasts. In any case many of the songs below were recorded by and popularised by country musicians of the period.

Tin Pan Alley and country music industries were not the only non-folk sources of titles here. There are also songs and poems of elite art provenance: poems written by William Henry Drummond and John Masfield are included here. One might argue that Drummond was a popular poet. Masfield on the other hand was certainly an elite art poet, well known as such even in his own day.

The second method of categorisation might be considered the "emic" scheme, based on the categorisations of the users of the material. From contextual clues in the scripts, such as who sang, to whom, and when, one might come up with the following categories: customary-emblematic; sea songs; ditties and humorous recitations; sentimental ballads; and those which, written especially for the show, are about the characters of the story. Except perhaps for the last-

⁸⁶ Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.: A Fifty Year History* (Austin: U Texas P, 1968, p. 44-45; Neil V. Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History* (Urbana: U Illinois P, 1985).

mentioned, these categories ignore provenance of texts. This is because it is clear that the sources of songs were not important to the performers; rather they were more concerned with whether the songs were appropriate to their repertoire by virtue of their internal characteristics.

The first category is that of songs I have labelled customary-
 emblematic. The term 'customary-emblematic' is certainly not an emic term, but the category is such. These are songs which, sung at particular times of the year, or on other non-calendric occasions, are emblems of ethnicity, giving the singer and the listener a sense of belonging and honouring. For instance, to sing 'The Bard of Armagh' on St. Patrick's day, as was done on the *Irene B. Mellon*, is to honour the Irish ethnicity not only of the performers but also of the audience. This honouring brings about a sense of belonging to a group with overt Irish ethnicity. To sing songs such as 'Jingle Bells' and 'Away in a Manger' at Christmastime serves the same function in a religious rather than ethnic way. These songs are emblems of faith and ethnicity similar to patriotic flags and religious banners, stating their messages in clear, explicit ways. To some extent all cultural items are emblematic of cultural ties. Any of the next categories might be seen as showing the singer's cultural affiliations. The difference is that the emblems are 'louder' messages, readable by larger audiences, and clearer in intent than the more esoteric cultural messages of the other categories.

The second category which is based on perceived relationships among the songs in the scripts is sea songs. These are songs which pertain specifically to

life at sea and include the worksongs or "shanties" of the sailors aboard the *Irene B. Mellon*. Songs listed below which fall into this category include "Away Rio" and "The Roaring Forties." The latter song was referred to in the script by the Master (played by Jack Withers) as an "old sailors' song" which he would not want to sing in the presence of a little girl like the stowaway, Rose.

The sea songs are somewhat more reflective of the fictional frame of the *Mellon* and somewhat less reflective of the cultural frame of the audience and performers. They were chosen to be aired presumably for their compatibility to the story. The pool of sea songs included both local and imported songs.

Although not a song, but rather a poem, John Masefield's "Sea Fever" falls into this category: an item of elite poetic culture which suited both the fictional needs of the story and the performative needs of the actors. An interesting item which might be included here is the song "Cliffs of Baccalieu," written by Jack Withers especially for the programme. Although he also wrote a recitation, "Christmas Eve at the Wheel," Withers never wrote another song.⁸⁷ His son, Ted Withers, who was a boy during the time of the production of the *Mellon* said that his father felt the need to incorporate new material into the show:

So I remember on one occasion, on this particular occasion Dad was actually talking out loud. "Really we need something different, something new." I don't know how long it took him to do it [to write

⁸⁷ Ted Withers, MUNFLA tape C6956/83-236. "Christmas Eve At The Wheel" was published by Jack Withers's daughter Doreen Tobias under her own name in Michael Harrington, ed., *Poems of Newfoundland* (St. John's: F. M. O'Leary, [1953]), pp. 96 - 97. A biographical note, on p. 118, notes that she "credits her father . . . with inspiring most of her poetry."

the song]. Very, very short time, because whenever he sat down to do something he would get it done in almost no time at all. And it would be done. Then he might take another look at it to see if there was something he could do to refine it. But very, very seldom did he change it. It seemed to me that he had an ability to see the whole thing in his head before he ever started to put it on paper. And then it was only a matter of rearranging a couple of words here and there. . . . ["Cliffs of Baccalieu"] represents to me all of the the great tension and drama and bustle and the battle with the sea and the hope and the concern for your [fellow man]. . . . It captures everything that those people -- not *those* people, because they were just hypothetical in an sense -- but the fishermen coming back from Labrador. Whether it was a two-masted schooner or a three-masted schooner it didn't matter. The fact of the matter is that those people were confronted with these terrible, terrible potential disasters every time they set sail. And it got to be quite popular. The only thing about it is, you know, Dad didn't push it. He used it I think only a couple of times that I remember. Two or three times. [MUNFLA tape C6956/83-236]

In fact Wilthers sang it himself the first time it was used on the programme, in early 1934, and then it was sung four more times, each time by Pat DeBourke, during the following seven years. "Cliffs of Baccalieu" is perhaps the most enduring legacy of the *Irene B. Mellon* series. The song went into both the popular and oral traditions of Newfoundland and remains an often-performed song in the revival repertory.⁸⁸

A third category here is that of the ditty and humorous recitation. The Cook and Willy, being the two most humorous characters in the show, were the main performers of this category. The term "ditty", Narváez and others have

⁸⁸ See my note on this song in the index below.

pointed out, is a widespread native term among Newfoundland singers.⁸⁹ It refers to usually short, variable songs which elicit laughter from listeners. Ditties often take the form of "mouth music", that is, sung primarily to accompany dance, but can also be sung as humorous presentations at other times, with adults and with children. Often, when "ditties" enter popular culture, they are transformed into specifically children's songs.

A number of songs were referred to as ditties by Withers when he wrote the *Mellon* scripts. Withers spent a great deal of time with the other musicians and singers in his band during the life of the programme, and it is reasonable to assume that his usage would have been very similar to that of the others whose musical roots were undoubtedly traditional. Two examples of ditties are "Tidy Idy" and "Squid Jiggin' Ground," the latter being then a recently popularised song by Arthur Scammell. Taft notes that "Squid Jiggin' Ground" became popular through popular culture media.⁹⁰ One of the *Mellon* performers points out that it was on the *Mellon* that the song was first sung on radio.⁹¹ It was sung by Jim Ring, the Cook, who went on to sing it at least five times, mainly in one season, the winter of 1937.⁹²

⁸⁹Peter Narváez, "Folksong", in J.R.Smallwood, et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. II (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, Ltd., 1984).

⁹⁰Michael Taft, *A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1904-1978*, MUNFLA Bibliographical and Special Series, No. 1 (St. John's: MUNFLA, 1978), p. xiii.

⁹¹Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983, C0957/83-230.

⁹²See the entry on this song in the index, below.

Most of the ditties used in the *Mellon* were traditional local songs; some of them came from ~~foreign popular culture~~. The recitations tended to come from foreign sources, popular and elite. "Turn of the Tide" is an example of a humorous recitation taken from an elite source: the poetry of British Poet Laureate John Masefield. A humorous song which seems to have come from a popular source is "My Old Dutch." It seems likely that the "Fags" is a World War One music hall recitation, perhaps arriving by the same route as "My Old Dutch," but no corroborating version of a recitation like this has been found.

The fourth category here is that of the sentimental ballads. These are songs which, having a narrative base and telling a story, often have a didactic, moral lesson. As well they are not sung primarily for their humour. The sources here include both Tin Pan Alley and nineteenth century broadsides, two overlapping categories. Included here are "Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie," the recitation "The Country Doctor" and "Little Man You've Had a Busy Day." These three items show the varied provenance of songs used in the *Mellon*: the first is an American broadside ballad, known more frequently as "The Dyin' Cowboy" and widely circulated in tradition. The second is a poem by the Canadian poet William Henry Drummond (1854 - 1907).⁹³ The third is a Tin Pan Alley composition from 1934.⁹⁴ One specific topical sub-genre of storysong was

⁹³ *The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond* (New York: Putnam, 1912), pp. ix, xviii, 158.

⁹⁴ Larry Freeman, *The Melodies Linger On* (Watkins Glen, N. Y.: Century House, 1951), p. 207.

sung by the character Willie; these were songs from World War I. His warsongs also included ditties from the War.

The fifth category of songs includes all the original songs which were written especially for the series. Already mentioned is "The Cliffs of Baccalieu," written by Jack Withers in order to brighten up what he felt was a repetitive repertoire of songs. Songs were contributed to *the Mellon* by listeners and by friends of the performers. William Hollett remembers being contacted by Jim Ring who told him that Jack Withers was desirous of obtaining a new song. They had heard one of Hollett's compositions, "The Dole Song," which was enjoying some popularity around St. John's, having been printed in the newspaper *The Public Bureau*, and having been performed by some participants in a concert.

So Jimmy said to me one time, he said, "Bill, how about doing a song for us," he said, "for the *Mellon*?" And I said, "I dunno - what kind of a song do you want?" He said, "Well some typical Newfoundland song, you know." I said, "OK, I'll give it a try." I think this was the first one I did for the *Mellon*. But it wasn't very long, I was probably two or three hours and I had it finished. And when I went down, I didn't [have it on paper]. They used to practise on Monday night. They'd get together and talk the programme on Monday night, they'd have a practice on Tuesday night, and they'd be on the air on Thursday night. So I would go down Monday, and I'd just recite to him. And Jack was a very fast typist--he worked with the telegraph. And he would talk and put a word down as fast as you could say it. The fingers [typing], and he'd say something to you and be writing something else. It's difficult to believe. I was amazed when I saw him. I said, "He can't be typing that." I mean, he'd turn to me with his head [turned] [miming typing with his head turned in conversation] while he's typing, like this. And he'd be getting that down and he'd say, "Yeah that sounds pretty good" [while still typing]. You know, and he'd be going like that [typing]. [PH LAUGHS.] It was really something. He was smart. So I believe the first one of them was "My Father's Old Sou'wester." They

liked it. And just for something then, because money was very scarce, just I suppose to make me feel good, he used to give me a dollar. That's something for a song, isn't it? (C7427/85-040)

Other songs which Hollett wrote for the *Mellon* included "Fish Hound Dan," "The Dream of the *Irene B. Mellon*," "Santa Claus Island" and an untitled song which also recounted a dream about the ship and her crew. Hollett recited "Fish Hound Dan" as follows.

"I was born on the sea with a hook in my hand
I suppose that's the reason I'm called Fish Hound Dan.
A happy-go-lucky cod-catcher am I,
Just listen a moment and I'll tell you why.
I'm awake in the morning before break of dawn
And I'm up out of bed with a stretch and a yawn.
Haul on me old duds, wash the sleep from me eyes,
Then I jump in me old boat and I'm off for me prize."⁹⁵

"The Dream of the *Irene B. Mellon*" began

"The *Irene B. Mellon* got caught in a squall,
She sank to the bottom, her poor crew and all."

Hollett said, "It was a really good one, about how they went up before St.

Peter."⁹⁶ About "Santa Claus Island" Hollett said "I don't remember a word of it." Hollett, C7427/85-040.),

The last, untitled, one went as follows.

"I fell asleep the other night and had a lovely dream;
I saw the good ship *Mellon* go a-sailing down the stream.
A jollier crew there never was than the boys of the *Irene B.*
That dream to me will always be a happy memory.

⁹⁵ Bill Hollett, 15 August 1984, MUNFLA tape C7427/85-040.

⁹⁶ MUNFLA tape C7427/85-040.

Sailing along she looked so gay, so gallant brave and bold,
 The sun was sinking in the west, it made her gleam like gold,
 Young Rose was standing to the wheel, she looked so full of joy,
 I knew that she was happy by the twinkle in her eye;
 The skipper and the mate nearby sat peacefully at ease,
 Their pipes filled up with Beaver, boy, blowing smoke rings on the breeze.

The sun went down behind the hill, the moon was rising high,
 She faded in the distance and the boys played Auld Lang Syne.⁹⁷

Hollett was not the only contributor of songs to the show, although he was probably the most prolific one and practically a member of the radio crew. In script #70 note is made of a song contributed by M. Ryan of Spaniard's Bay: a "little song that tells all about our voyages" (IBM#70-17). Scattered throughout the 170 scripts are occasional references to such contributions by listeners. Very early in the life of the series an appeal was made to listeners, especially those in the outports, to send in the words to songs which the crew might not know. Although there is no evidence that this call was repeated, there is certainly evidence that the audience continued to respond by sending in their creations. This is a testimony to the vitality of the Newfoundland song-making tradition in that era.

⁹⁷ C7427/85-040.

Chapter 5

The Songs of the Irene B. Mellon

Explanatory Note

After each song's title is given, a number appears in two parts, the first of which refers to the episode number and the second the page number within that episode. After each episode and page number is a letter which signifies who sang the song in that episode. The letters refer as follows to the characters:

C	Cook (Jim Ring)
E	Mac (Ern MacDonald)
F	Frank (Frank O'Toole)
M	Mate (Ted Coleman)
O	Master (Oldman, Jack Withers)
P	Pat (Bosun, Pat DeBourke)
R	Rose (Marie Withers)
W	Willie (Frank O'Toole)

Other performers are given their name or other designation spelled out in full: eg., the Boatman recites "Burlington Bertie", and in one case "all hands" sing "Away Rio [Bound For the Rio Grande]".

As mentioned previously, the term "emblematic" refers to the function of songs which are sung at particular times and on particular dates in order to call attention to and to honour religious holidays and ethnic origins. In the same way that a flag might be displayed in a setting where visual cues are functional, an emblematic song may be sung in an aural setting. They both honour their

referent in a symbolic fashion. The most common use of this term in the folksong index below is in reference to songs either of Irish origin or of Irish reference. It is also used for Scottish songs, Christmas songs and a few patriotic songs.

Key

Casey, Wareham and Rosenberg = George Casey, Wilfred Wareham and Neil Rosenberg, "Repertoire Classification and Performer-Audience Relationships: Some Newfoundland Examples," *Ethnomusicology*, 16 (1972), 397 - 403.

FB = Florence E. Brunnings, *Folk Song Index: A Comprehensive Guide to the Florence E. Brunnings Collection* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1981). A citation such as "FB:17 (23)" means that Brunnings gives 23 references to that title on page 17 of her *Index*.

GQ = Gordon Quinton.

Mackenzie = W. Roy Mackenzie, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Nova Scotia* (orig. 1929; Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1963).

Mercer = Paul Mercer, *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print, 1842 - 1974*, MUN Folklore Bibliographical and Special Series, No. 6 (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1979).

Mercer thesis = *A Bio-Bibliography of Newfoundland Songs in Printed Sources*, unpublished MA thesis (Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1978).

MH = Morgiana Halley.

MLO = Larry Freeman, *The Melodies Linger On: Fifty Years of Popular Music* (Watkins Glen, N. Y.: Century House, 1951).

Newfoundlander (monthly newspaper published by the F. M. O'Leary Company and containing a column, "Your Favourite Songs").

Peacock = Kenneth Peacock, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outport* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1965), 3 vols.

PF = Patricia Fulton.

Roden = Philip J. Roden, "A McCormack Discography," in Lilly McCormack, *I Hear You Calling Me - The John McCormack Story* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1949), pp. 190 - 201.

SS = Sigmund Spaeth, *Read 'Em and Weep: The Songs You Forgot To Remember*, Halcyon House, New York, 1939.

Taft = Michael Taft, *A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1904 - 1972*, MUNFLA Special and Bibliographical Series, No. 1, MUNFLA, St. John's, 1975.

TPA = Jack Burton, *The Blue Book of Tin Pan Alley*, 2nd edition, Century House, Watkins Glen, New York, 1962.

Index of Songs

- *Alone in the Manger* [Away In A Manger], 104-12, R; *FB*:17 (23); *MUNFLA* 68-26/C517 (Dec. 1961, Harbour Buffett, PB), W. Wareham; *MUNFLA* 70-37/C753 (Dec. 1969, Stephenville), J. Fudge; *Newfoundlander* 10:7 (Dec. 1947) 11; *Newfoundlander* 13:11 (Dec. 1951) 6. Often called "Luther's Cradle-Hymn" and popularly attributed to Martin Luther, modern collections attribute this song to J.R. Murray (*50 Golden Christmas Songs* [Hialeah, Fla.: Columbia Pictures Publications, 1981], p. 30).
- *Banks of Newfoundland*, 20-14, 15, C; *FB*:21 (a total of 15 citation of three different songs/tunes); there are at least three different song texts which go by this title and Mercer gives references to these as well as to the dance tune which goes by the same title. This dance tune has been recorded under other titles such as "Up The Pond" (Quidi Vidi Ceili Band, Pigeon Inlet Production, 45 rpm record, ca. 1982) while being known popularly as "The Nanny Goat Chased The Billy Goat" or "The Regatta Song." Since the song is sung here, it seems likely it is one of the "textual" rather than "tune" songs. As "The Nanny Goat" it is a widespread chime music tune in Newfoundland. The *Newfoundlander* 7:12 (May 1945) 11 has a note that the words had been requested by a reader but that the text had already been published in an earlier issue. Volume seven of the *Newfoundlander* is unfortunately the earliest extant volume.
- *Bard of Armagh*, 116-9, P; *FB*:22 (7); *Newfoundlander* 9:8 (Nov. 1946) 12, 14; this popular, emblematic Irish song was sung in an episode dated 16 March, the night before St. Patrick's Day. John McCormack popularised it in the 1920s on at least two records, Victor 983 and Decca DA 1752 (Roden).
- *Barney McCoy*, 10-5, P; *FB*: 221 "Norah Darling" (1); *Newfoundlander* 8:9 (Feb. 1946) 17; requested, *Newfoundlander* 10:8 (Jan. 1948) 21.
- *Beautiful Blue Danube*, 15-11, R.
- [*She's Only A] Bird in a Gilded Cage*, 164-8, 14, W; 91-5, 6, R; *FB*:29 (4); *MUNFLA* 71-48/C883 (Millville, Codroy Valley, Aug. 1970), Margaret Bennett; this song was published 1900 by Harry von Tilzer (lyrics by Arthur J. Lamb) [*MLO*, p. 193]. It was made popular early in the century by Beatrice Kay (the "I Don't Care Girl").
- *Blow The Man Down*, 119-6, 7, W; 126-1, W; *FB*:31 (47); this shanty or work song, varies considerably in the versions collected, even

within Newfoundland. This version has the singer "walking down Paradise Street", but other versions have "Ratcliffe Highway." However, one other version, *Newfoundlander* 7:8 (Jan. 1945), 16, also has "Paradise Street."

[Bound For The Rio Grande] "Away Rio", 170-3, all hands; *FB*:17 (8) as "Away Rio"; *FB*:262 (51) as "Rio Grande". Mercer notes two versions, the earliest published in 1924 (George Allan England's *Vikings of the Ice*, reprinted in 1974 as *The Greatest Hunt in the World*).

*Burlington Bertie [From Bow], 87-23, Boatman; this humorous poem was written by William Hargreaves and made popular by Ella Shields in 1914 on the British music hall stage. Late in his career, the English monologist, Stanley Holloway, added it to his repertoire; it is to be found, with an introductory note in *Stanley Holloway: More Monologues and Songs*, ed. Michael Marshall, Elm Tree Books, London, 1980, pp. 50-53.

[Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie]. "The Dyin' Cowboy" (*Laws* B2), 45-18, R; 54-9; 60-7,8; under the title "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie." Brunnings lists 13 examples (*FB*:42); under the title "The Dyin' Cowboy" she lists a further 10 (*FB*:82); Peacock has a Newfoundland version of this American broadside (pp. 153-4), from Rocky Harbour.

Byways, 94-17, Dick and Jim.

City Of Baltimore, 54-9, R; *FB*:54 (1). This songtitle is crossed out in the script and instead "Dyin' Cowboy" was sung.

Cliffs Of Baccalieu, 13-4, O; 104-1, P; 122-6,9, P; 145-2, P; 160-13,14, P; MUNFLA 73-7/C1373 (St Joseph's, PB, Nov 1972), Kevin Daley; MUNFLA 85-151 (Fox Harbour, PB, Summer 198, a manuscript "ballet book" version, "Back A Lou"), K. S. Goldstein; *Newfoundlander* 7:10 (March 1945) 11, requested; *Newfoundlander* 9:10 (March 1947) 9, printed with a note that it was contributed by the author, E. J. Withers; Mercer notes only one published version, Dick Nolan, ed., *The Ninth Edition of Newfoundland Songs Compliments of Bennett Brewing*, [St. John's, 1974], p. 13. It was also printed in *Dominion Ale Presents the Newfoundland Songbook in Commemoration of the Canada Games 1977*, Carling-O'Keefe Brewery, St. John's [1977], p. 15. It has been recorded at least six times: Harry Hibbs, *The Incredible Harry Hibbs* Arc AS818, ca 1969; Edison Williams, *The Roving Newfoundlander Audat* 477-9006, 1972; Kitty Vitty Minstrels, *The Cliffs Of Baccalieu*

Audat 477-9033, ca 1973; Winston Saunders with the Newfoundland Showband; *Winston's Accordion Favorites*—Marathon ALS 351, 1972; John White with the Ray Walsh Band, *Voice Of Newfoundland International Artists* 'A3014, 1966; Ryan's Fancy, *A Time With Ryan's Fancy* Boot-BOS 7197, 1979. E. John "Jack" Withers wrote this song especially for the *Irene B. Mellon* series and it was he who sang it the first time it was sung on the show. Later it became one of Pat DeBourke's songs and it was DeBourke who sang it on the Kitty Vitty Minstrels album named for the song. This version is the shortest of all the recorded versions, a fact attributed by DeBourke to the fact that the recording people from Audat were in a hurry to get the whole album recorded and the haste made him forget lines and duplicate others. On that album credit is given, strangely, as "Trad. B. Janes." Bernard Janes managed the recording of the album for Jim Ring, his father-in-law, and somehow he was given credit for this song even though the record liner notes (written by local writer and media celebrity Ron Pumphrey) state that it was written by "the late John Withers." [Interview with Pat DeBourke, Dec 1983, MUNFLA Tape 83-236/C6957.] The Ryan's Fancy album gives credit to Jack Withers and dates the song to 1938. In fact it was first sung on the programme 26 April 1934. The version which Withers sent to the *Newfoundlander* in 1947 is the longest one, consisting of six verses; most of the other versions are five verses. It would seem that Withers' is the original version but not the one which circulated widely. There are differences among the other versions, but all (but DeBourke's) are five verses and seem to spring from a single, missing source.

The Coon's Adventure, 42-6, M. "Coon" songs, like blackface comedy, was a popular music hall form of entertainment in the decade or so around the turn of the century. Songsters of "coon" songs were sold in St. John's during that period as can be seen from the sticker attached to a copy of *The Second Book of Old-Time Coon Songs* (London: Felix McGlennan, n.d.) in the library of the Folklore Department, Memorial U of Newfoundland. The sticker notes the book was purchased at Garland's Bookstore, 179 Water Street, St. John's. No date is given in the book, but it appears to have been published about 1910 - 1920.

The Country Doctor, 122-4, O. This is a version of the poem by W.H.Drummond entitled "The Canadian Country Doctor",

written like much of Drummond's work in a stage version of French-Canadian accented English: *The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond*, Putnam, New York, 1912, pp. 158-162. It is not the only work by Drummond used in the *Irene B. Mellon*; see also "The Wreck of the *Julie Plante*". There are also about a halfdozen other unidentifiable recitations made by French or French-Canadian characters, which may have been Drummond works.

- "Darling Growing Old", 74-5, P; this may in fact be a variant title for "Silver Threads Among The Gold", *q.v.*, below.
- "Did Your Mother Come From Ireland?", 90-10, R; like the song "Bard of Armagh", this song is emblematic of Irish ethnicity and often sung by North American Irish and would-be Irish on St. Patrick's Day. This episode was indeed aired near St. Patrick's Day, on 15 March.
- [Ditty about hot weather], 66-12, C; the text notes that this "ditty" was sung to the tune of "Channel of Toslo" [The Ryans and the Pittmans]. Several songs were contributed to the *Mellon* by listeners and, when these were noted in the script, names of familiar tunes were given. This is probably one such contribution.
- "O England, My Country", 146-12, R; this was sung during the War and probably was a song popular at the time.
- "Fags", 140-11,12; P; the text gives a first line of this recitation ("When the cold is making ice cream of the marrow of your bones,") and even a synopsis of it ("What the soldier thought of a cigarette"), but no version of it has been found.
- "Fishhound Dan", 170-2, C; this song was written and contributed by William Hollett, a friend of the *Mellon* crew who also wrote other songs for the show (see "My Father's Old Sou'wester").
- "Foggy Dew", 128-14, P; 139-4, P; although Brunnings lists nine different songs by this title, it seems clear that one of them ("Old Bugaboo" and variants) is the same as this Newfoundland song. She gives 15 references to this one: *FB*:98; *MUNFLA* 64-17/C132 (Pines Cove, GNP, March - August 1964), *M. Firestone*; *MUNFLA* 66-24/C282 (St. Paul's, Aug. 1966), *H. Halpert* and *J. Widdowson*; *MUNFLA* 72-195/C1349 (Jerseyside, PB, Spring 1972), *Elizabeth Pittman*; *MUNFLA* 72-208/C1159 (Port-aux-Basques, Spring 1972), *Bob Simms*.
- "Goodnight Little Girl Of My Dreams", 39-16, R/P.
- "Happy Birthday To You", 138-22, all hands; *FB*:120 (4); this song, which has gone into tradition all throughout North American society, was

written by Mildred J. Hill, an American schoolteacher, as "Good Morning To You" in 1893. Her sister, Patty Hill, wrote the music: TPA: 159.

[Hark The Herald Angels Sing] "Ark Ark The 'Aroid Hangels Sing", 104-13, W; FB:120 (28); *Newfoundlander* 9:7 (Dec. 1946) 11; *Newfoundlander* 12 [mislabelled "16"] 6 (Dec., 1949); 14:10 (Dec. 1952) 9; MUNFLA 68-26/C518 (Harbour Buffett, PB, Dec. 1961), W. Wareham; MUNFLA 72-87/C1182 (St. John's, 1971), L. Walsh; this carol was first published as such in 1856 although the music had existed for several decades since composition by Felix Mendelssohn and the words had been written by Charles Wesley in 1743 (Denis Arnold, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Music* [Oxford: OUP, 1983], p. 808). It was popularised by Protestant churches who incorporated it into their hymnbooks.

"Here We Are Again", 101-31, R; 132-4, W; Brunnings lists two different songs by this title, each with a single citation: FB: 125.

"Home In Texas", 89-21, C; *Newfoundlander* 8:11 (Apr. 1946) 9 ("My Home In Texas") noted but not published; Jimmie Rodgers recorded "I Had A Home Down In Texas" and this may be the same song.

"Home On", 111-7, Herbert; this is sung by a "townie" of Willie the Cockney, and so it seems unlikely that it is "Home, Home On The Range," which song is a very well-known one: FB:130 (61).

"I Don't Work For A Living", 9-6, F; FB:137 (1); local musician Gordon Quinton informs me that this has been a popular waltz in Newfoundland with the words "Give me a nail and a hammer/ And a picture to hang on the wall."

"Isle of Capri", 37-16, R; 41-13, R "for Thelma and Dot"; 61-18, R; 86-13, R; FB:151 (1); published by T.B.Harms, 1934 (MLO, p. 207).

"Jingle Bells", 78-11, F; FB:157 (35); *Newfoundlander* 8:7 (Dec. 1947) 12 (requested); *Newfoundlander* 11:7 (Dec. 1948) 20; MUNFLA 72-87/C1182, C1184, C1185 (St. John's, Dec., 1971), L. Walsh; originally known as "The One-Horse Open Sleigh", this was written by J. Pierpont in 1853 (TPA:7).

"(Free and Easy While) Jogging Along", 6ii-5, C; 8-8,9, C; 46-10, C; Brunnings lists "Free And Easy", FB:101 (1).

"Kelligrews Soiree", 11-8, -; 109-6, F; FB: 164 (3); this is perhaps the most published of the songs listed in Mercer's index, the earliest published version being 1904. Curiously there is no version in the MUNFLA Song Title Index and it was neither requested nor published in the *Newfoundlander*. Perhaps this is an example

of true popular culture material which could never be seen as folk culture; certainly many singers of folksongs would not like to sing a "common" song such as this (Casey, Wareham and Rosenberg point out the phenomenon of singers preferring obscure material in their repertoires).

- Kelly*, 129-6, C; Mercer lists three different songs with "Kelly" in the title and the MUNFLA Song Title Index includes a fourth and fifth. The most usual one of all these is "Kelly and the Ghost." The McNulty Family recorded and made popular "Kelly The Boy From Killane" (Decca 12236-B) and local entertainer John White sang it widely, recording it himself in the late 1960s on his longplay record, *John White At The Carbou Club*, Arc AS 804. This song was a popular Irish patriotic song, written by P.J. McCall to commemorate the 1798 uprising (Peter Narváez, "The Protest Songs of a Labor Union On Strike Against an America Corporation in a Newfoundland Company Town; A Folkloristic Analysis With Special References to Oral Folk History," unpublished dissertation, Indiana University, 1986, pp. 169-170, fnn 189, 190).
- Kiss Me Goodnight, Sergeant Major*, 170-2, W; this is a World War One music hall song which enjoyed a revival by Vera Lynn in World War Two. A collection of wartime songs (many of which are parodies of popular songs of the day) is named for this song: Martin Page, ed., *Kiss Me Goodnight, Sergeant Major: The Songs and Ballads of World War II*, introduction by Spike Milligan, illustrated by Bill Tidy, Panther Books, London; 1975.
- Lamplighting Time In The Valley*, 112-3, R; this was a popular song on the *Don Messer Show* in the 1950s and 1960s [PF/GQ]. It was also the theme song of a local, weekly radio programme of country music hosted by Ralph Bishop in the late 1940s in St. John's (Mike McHugh, personal communication, 6 June 1986).
- Little Man You've Had A Busy Day*, 29-4, R; published 1934 by T.B. Harms (MLO, p. 207) who also published the song "Isle of Capri", above.
- A little song that tells all about our voyages*, 70-17, E; it is not clear at all what this song is except that the script tells us it was written by M. Ryan of Spaniard's Bay and that it includes some mention of "the little dog called Spot, the Mate's cuff, and Beaver [tobacco]."
- Love Will Remember*, 21-12, O.

- *Molly Molloney*, 56-8, R; MUNFLA 64-13/C86 (Fogo, July 1964), J. Widdowson and F. Earle. This appears to be a stage Irish song, not to be confused with the more well-known *Cockles and Mussels, Sweet Molly Malone*.
- *Moonlight and Skies*, 40-9, E.
- *My Father's Old So'wester*, 132-11, C; neither MUNFLA's Song Title Index nor the *Newfoundlander* have versions of this song, but Mercer lists three published versions, the earliest being Doyle's songbook of 1955; he also notes Leach (pp. 290 - 291) and Omar Blondahl [*Newfoundlanders, Sing!* (St. John's: E. J. Bonnell, 1964), p. 57.] A fourth published version, not noted by Mercer, is in *The Pulse*, a periodical newsletter of the General Hospital, St. John's, December 1968. The editor of the newsletter noted that its version, from the author, is the original one, and that the song was widely sung and "has changed a little." It has been recorded at least three times: by Edison Williams (*The Roving Newfoundlander*, Audat 477-9014, 1972); Omar Blondahl (*A Visit To Newfoundland with Omar Blondahl*, Rodeo RLP 34, 1958); and Rick Avery and Judy Greenhill (*Harbour Grace*, J and R Records JR001, 1981). With slight changes the last recorded version is essentially Leach's text. *My Father's Old So'wester*, like *Santa Claus Island* and *Cliffs of Baccalieu*, was written especially for the *Irene B. Mellon*. This was the first of several songs which Bill Hollett wrote for Jack Withers to use of the programme; see p. 170, above.
- *My Heart Is Like A Beehive*, 69-4, E. FB: 212 (1); curiously the single reference by Brunings is to an undated British songster: *The British Students' Song Book* (London & Glasgow: Bayley and Ferguson, n.d.). Withers may have learned this song during his time in the British Navy during the First World War.
- *My Little Cabane*, 108-3,4, O; recitation of a poem by W.H. Drummond (see also *The Country Doctor*, above, and *The Wreck of the Julie Plante*, below). Drummond's original is called *My Leetle Cabane*, *The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond* (New York: Putnam, 1912), pp. 140-143.
- *My Old Dutch*, 104-9, W; FB: 214 (2); a sentimental British music hall song the full title of which is *My Old Dutch Plate*, referring via Cockney riming slang to the speaker's "mate" or wife. It was written and composed by Charles Ingle: Tony Barrand, notes to *An Evening At The English Music Hall*, Front Hall Records FHR-030, rec. 1974, notes 1978.

- "Old Barn Dance On De Farm", 18-12, Bodoit; probably an excerpt from "Le Vieux Temp" by W.H. Drummond, *The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond* (New York: Putnam, 1912), pp. 9-18. The character who recites it, Bodoit, is a French Canadian.
- "Old Faithful", 42-10, Sam.
- "Old Friends Have Met Again", 77-267R.
- "Old Spinning Wheel", 48-21, Jennie; Wilf Carter sang a song called "The Old Spinning Wheel In The Parlour" and this may be that song. A song by the shorter title was published 1934 by Shapiro, Bernstein and Co. (*MLO*, p. 207) and was a popular hit in the United States, and by extension in Newfoundland, too. The *Newfoundlander*, 13:3 (March 1951) p. 5, has a poem by this title written by John Yetman of Bryant's Cove, CB, but it seems unlikely it is this.
- "On The Irene B. Mellon, Bound Down For Bahia", 67 [68]:22, C; in the script it says that "somebody in St. John's made up that one". Perhaps this was Bill Hollett (see "My Father's Old Sou'Wester", above).
- "Peg Leg Jack", 27-6, E; *MUNFLA* 73-89/pp. 86-87 (Port de Grave, CB, Winter 1972), A. Dawe; this song was recorded by the West Virginia country singer Doc Williams in the 1950s [GQ].
- "Phil the Fluter's Ball" 120-5, F; 144-13, W; *FB*:246 (2); a stage Irish song.
- "Red Wing", 27-5, R; 51-10 verso, -; *FB*:259 (9); this popular song from the 1930s was one of the original "Indian maid" songs; it was later made popular by Doc Williams in the 1950s [PF/GQ].
- "Roaring Forties", 6ii-8, O; 21-12, Q; 170-2, O. The only clue to this song, presumably about the latitudes of forty degrees, is that once, instead of singing it to Rose, the Master says it is a "sailor's song" not the kind he would sing to a little girl and instead he sings "Love Will Remember".
- "Rock-a-bye Moon", 77-2,3, R; 164-12,13, Judy Puffin.
- "Rose Of Tralee", 1-7, P; *FB*:266 (6); *Newfoundlander* 9:3 (Aug, 1946) 17; *MUNFLA* 64-16/C126 (Codroy Valley, Apr. 1964), J. Szwed; *MUNFLA* 73-34/pp. 5-6 (Joe Batt's Arm, Fall 1972); D. Ryan; *MUNFLA* 73-89/p. 95 (Port de Grave, Winter 1972), A. Dawe. This is another song popularised by the Irish tenor John McCormack whose recording was issued as Victor 1452 and as Decca DA 1119 (Roden).
- "Roso", 10-4, F.

Ryans And The Pittmans, 2-9, P; 34-9, C; 45-17, Ed Brendon; 107-8, F; as **We'll Rant and We'll Roar**, *FB*:336 (3); MUNFLA 70-8/C695 (Arnold's Cove, PB, Aug. 1969), W. Wareham; MUNFLA 71-48/C885 (Upper Ferry, Codroy Valley, Aug. 1979), M. Bennett; 73-45/C1429 (Black Duck Brook, Sept. 1972), M. Taft & S. Posen. Mercer lists 21 different published versions of this song from 1912 on, making it one of the most published songs in Newfoundland (see **Kelligrews Soiree**, above). It was sung four times during the *Irene B. Mellon* series: the first two times as **Channel of Toslo**.

Sailor's Alphabet, 2-9, F; 20-11a, 12, F; 41-14, C; 50-12, P; 81-9, R; 103-12, 13, R/P/F; 120-4, P+; *FB*:269 (4); Peacock collected a version of this song in Cormack, 1958 (pp. 885-886); MUNFLA 64-17/C131 (Savage Cove, GNP, March - Aug. 1964), M. Firestone; MUNFLA 66-10/p. 53 (Harbour Mille, FB, June 1965), H. Lear; 69-36/C590 (St. Shott's, Dec. 1968), T. Neme; 70-27/p. 149 (Calvert, Nov. 1969), K. Sullivan; 71-112/pp. 5-6 (Lumsden-Pinchard's Island, BB, Aug. 1971), J. Parsons; 72-1/C1039 (Harbour Breton, Mar. 1971), W. Jackman; Wilf and Christine Doyle recorded this song as **The Alphabet Song** in the early 1970s on their album *The Sailor's Alphabet* (Marathon Paragon ALS 306). This song, more than other songs which were repeated in more than one show, was sung by a variety of characters. The script for episode #103 gives a line from the song, **Give a sailor his grub and there's nothing goes wrong.** The other versions, including the MUNFLA ones and Peacock's, have instead of the word **grub**, the word **grog**. It may be that Withers did not want to overplay the drunken stereotype of sailors and so eliminated the reference to **grog**. DeBourke remembers that the word sung was **grub**; he does not remember the word **grog** ever being sung (C8439/86-088).

Sally Brown I loves your daughter*, **Eigh 'o Sally Brown*, **Eigh 'o Sally Brown, 126-3, W; *FB*:271 (26). Mercer lists a similar shantying song but **I loves your daughter** is variant; likewise the Nova Scotian version in Mackenzie (#108), the Brunnings versions, and the Newfoundland versions in MUNFLA, in the *Newfoundlanders* 8:4 (Sept. 1945) 16 and in G.S.A. Cox, *Folk Music In A Newfoundland Outport*, pp. 55, 180. Omar Blondahl, the revival folk singer who spent several years singing, collecting and publishing folksongs in Newfoundland,

recorded it on *Trade Winds - Saga of the Open Sea* Rodeo International RNT 2007. Here this song is sung by Willie who, although he often performs humorous recitations and songs, is not known for his singing or his memory. It may be for dramatic effect that here he is singing wrong words to what may have been a well-known popular song. Credence is added to this by the very fact that two full lines of text are given in the script; usually Withers wrote titles in by hand, after the typed scripts were prepared and presumably during rehearsal. By having so much song text in the script itself he may have been making sure that a variant version was sung.

- *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*, 52-22, R; 78-10, R; 103-11, R; 104-12, R; FB:272 (1); MUNFLA 72-87/C1182, C1185 (St. John's, Dec. 1971), L. Walsh; MUNFLA 72-238/C1388 (Hayward's Cove, St. Brendan's, July 1972), T. Broderick; published 1934 by Leo Feist, Inc, words by Haven Gillespie and music by John F. Coots; popularised in 1934 by Jan Garber's Orchestra (MLO, 137). A Canadian issue of a "cover" version of this song, by the Novelty Dance Orchestra (Vocal Chorus), presumably a house orchestra of Compo Records of Lachine, Montreal, was purchased in a second-hand shop in St. John's and a copy of it is MUNFLA Tape C8506/86-125. The record, Melotone (Compo) 92107A [91899A, 16291-1], probably dates from a year or two after the original success of the song. Like other Christmas songs, this was sung on the programme only near Christmas; a similar practise to the singing of the emblematic Irish songs like "Sing Something Irish To Me", "Did Your Mother Come From Ireland" and others near St. Patrick's Day.

- *Santa Claus Island*, 122-11, 13, C; this is another song written by Bill Hollett especially for the *Irene B. Mellon* (see "My Father's Old Sou'wester"). It was not sung at Christmas (Episode #122 was aired 27 April 1939); the only reference to Christmas is in fact in the fact that the Island belonged to Santa Claus. Instead it is about the crew of the *Mellon* and their exploits, a whimsical song which also brought into the text the sponsor's product, Beaver Tobacco. When the Cook introduces the song he says, "Oh, any tune'll do. The Squid Jiggin' Ground or anything I can sing to it." Almost three months before (IBM #110, 2 Feb. 1939, p. 9) Frank sang another song about the *Irene B. Mellon* to the same tune and which he said he got from a friend. This may be the same song as "Santa Claus Island" but it seems

unlikely due to the fact that when the Cook introduces the latter song it is as a new song.

[Sea Fever] "I Wanta Go Down To The Sea Again", 99-13, R; *FB*:274 (1); this is perhaps the best known of John Masefield's poems (*Salt Water Poems and Ballads*, Macmillan, New York, 1916, p. 55); it was published in the St. John's *Observer's Weekly* 1:6 (24 Feb. 1934), p. 8 with an editor's note that it "should find an echo in the hearts of all Newfoundlanders". The first line of the original reads "I must down to the sea again" (and later printed versions of the poem add in the verb "go"); Withers adapted it slightly for the programme.

"Silver Threads Among The Gold", 166-8, W/C; *FB*:281 (12); a popular sentimental song from the last century, it was given continued popularity by a recording by John McCormack, Victor Red Seal 1173, in the 1920s (Mick Moloney, "Irish Ethnic Recordings and the Irish-American Imagination," in American Folklife Center, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1982, p. 84). Rodens lists an additional five issues of the song by McCormack. It was also recorded by Wilf Caffer and a 1970s reissue includes it as one of his "hits," *40th Anniversary Special*, RCA Camden KDL2-009, ca 1978.

"Sing Something Irish For Me", 64-15, O; 116-15, R; both occasions of the singing of this emblematic Irish song were on programmes dated 16 March (1937 and 1939, respectively), a day before St. Patrick's Day. On this see, for example, "Did Your Mother Come From Ireland" and, on the similar practise of seasonal songs at Christmas, "Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town", above.

"The Song Of The Mouth Organ", 122-10, W; this recitation is not given any text in the script but a summary of it is given. Before reciting it Willie says, "The bloke wot wrote it 'e was tryin' fer to say 'ow the little mouthorgan could 'old his own with all them other big instruments loik." After he finishes Rose says, "That shows the mouthorgan although it doesn't cost very much can play some tunes just as nice as the big instruments." Since Willie played the mouth organ it seems likely that the recitation, *cante fable*-style, may have included music on the instrument.

"The Spanish Main" 53-5, R; Mercer lists three published versions of this song in Newfoundland; MUNFLA 65-16/C149 (Grand Bank, July-Aug. 1965), H. Halpert and R. Noseworthy; MUNFLA 66-23/C240 (St. Shott's, July 1966), H. Halpert and N. Halpert; MUNFLA

70-8/C673 (Southern Harbour, PB, May 1969), W. Wareham;
 70-8/C778 (Arnold's Cove, PB, June 1970), W. Wareham;
 MUNFLA 72-208/C1160 (Port aux Basques, Spring 1972), Bob
 Simms; *Newfoundlander* 7:3 (Aug. 1944) 22 (requested).

- "Squid Jiggin' Ground", 56-19, C; 59-25, C; 60-7,8, R; 62-17, C; 98-14, C; 105-3, C; *FB*: 293 (12); MUNFLA 71-3/C829 (Moreton's Harbour, July 1969), L. Small; MUNFLA 73-89/pp. 104-5 (Port-de-Grave, Winter 1972), A. Dawe. *Newfoundlander* 9:4 (Sept. 1946) 26 (requested); *Newfoundlander* 13:11 (Dec. 1951) 9; each time this song was actually sung on the show, the Cook sang it: the one example above where it is attributed to Rose is an example of her being mentioned as singing it, but off the ship (her governess disapproved of such songs as this). On a later programme the song is not sung, but the tune is mentioned and the comment is appended "that the Cook sings" (IBM #110, p. 9) showing a kind of propriety of this song in the small group of the *Mellon*. Part of the reason for this propriety would be respect among the musicians; part of it would no doubt be the expectations of the listeners. Taft notes (*Discography*, p. xiii), that it was because of the popularity achieved by this song through popular culture media that the author Art Scammell published and recorded it in the early 1940s. Likely the *Mellon*'s exposure of the song to a wide audience was part of this growth of popularity. It may have even instigated it: the first singing of the song on the programme was dated 19 January 1937. Mercer lists eighteen published references, the earliest being in Smallwood's *Book Of Newfoundland*, 1937, so it is possible that the *Mellon*'s broadcast of the song was the first use of it in the popular media. Pat DeBourke confirms that Jim Ring (the Cook) was the first ever to sing the song on the radio (C6957/83-236); it may have been performed on stage before that, though. It should be mentioned that the Cook refers to the song as a "ditty" when he sings it in episode #98.
- "The Stone Outside Dan Murphy's Door", 122-15, R; 135-18, R; 170-2, all hands; popular song, recorded by the Four Provinces Orchestra, about December 1928, and issued on the Columbia disc 33258-F, part of their Irish series (Pekka Gronow, *The Columbia 33000-F Irish Series*, JEMF Special Series, Los Angeles, 1979); *Newfoundlander* 8:9 (Feb. 1946) 18 (requested); MUNFLA 78-008/C3348 (Arnold's Cove [rec. Grand Falls], July 1977), D. Kodish; it was recorded by Dick Nolan, *Lukey's Boat* Arc AS810, ca 1988.

"Sweet Chimin' Chimin' Christmas Bells", 127-3, W; from the context of the script, this may have been a non-existent song -- as soon as Willie started to sing it he was asked by all to stop due to his poor voice.

"Take Me Out To The Ball Game", 129-8, R/W; published 1908 by Jerry Vogel Music, the words were by Jack Norworth and the music by Albert von Tilzer (TPA, p. 298).

"Teapots at the Fire", 92-7, F; There are no references to this in either MUNFLA or the *Newfoundlander*; Mercer gives three published references, one to an undated Johnny Burke songster and the others to 1960s compilations. It should be noted that the song is always attributed to Burke. John White recorded it on his album *Voice of Newfoundland* International Artists IA3014, ca. 1966. When Frank sings the song in the *Mellon* he mentions that it is an old song which he hasn't heard in a long time and the other characters agree. Johnny Burke had been dead for eight years in 1938 when this show was aired, but his activity as a song hawker had ceased some time before that (Mercer thesis).

"There's A Tear In Your Eye Sweetheart Darlin'", 23-5, B, R.

[Three Devils For Fish] "The Crooked Nose Punt, She Sails Like A Squid", 46-10, C; 47-14, C; 51-13, C; Mercer gives the earliest reference to the song as Doyle's songbook in its 1927 (first) edition; it was later published in *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads* 13:1 (1966) 41; there seems to be no reference to it in *Newfoundlander*; there are four collected versions in MUNFLA: MUNFLA 64-17/G129 (Savage Cove, Pines Cove, March-Aug. 1964), M. Firestone; MUNFLA 70-8/C642 (Arnold's Cove, Dec. 1968), W. Wareham; MUNFLA 70-8/C671 (Southern Harbour, PB, May 1969), W. Wareham; MUNFLA 73-180/C1624 (Fox Harbour, PB, Summer 1973), E. Spurvey. Like "Squid Jiggin' Ground", this song is called a "ditty" by the Cook (IBM #51, p. 13).

"Tidy Idy", 47-19 verso, [P]; MUNFLA 64-13/C86 (Fogo, July 1964), J. Widdowson and F. Earle ("Tidy Ellen"); MUNFLA 67-22/116 (Fortune Harbour, Summer 1964), J. Widdowson ("Tidy Eli"); 68-31/C501 (St. John's, April 1968), M. White and O. McGrath ("Tidy-ee-i, ye got a new dress"). This is closely related to and is sung to the same tune as "I see the B'y." Pat DeBourke, the "Bosun", remembers this ditty as follows:

Tidy Idy got a new dress
 Tidy - I, it's a fine one.
 Tidy Idy got a new Dress
 Made out of her mother's old ope.

(Pat Debourke, fieldnotes, unrecorded interview, 26 January 1985).

"Till The Lights Of London Shine Again", 170-2, R; *Newfoundlander* 7:6 (Nov. 1944) 17 (requested); *Newfoundlander* 8:2 (July 1945) 8 (requested as "When The Lights of London Come On Again").

"Trinity Cake", 112-8, F; *FB*: 319 (1) (Brunnings also has a reference to the similar song, "Mrs. Hooligan's Christmas Cake", *FB*: 209); there are no references to "Trinity Cake" in the *Newfoundlander* nor does it turn up in the MUNFLA Song Title Index. Mercer gives thirteen references to the song in print, the earliest being 1912, when the author, Johnny Burke published it in one of his songbooks. This is a similar situation to another Johnny Burke song, "The Kelligrews Soiree", *q.v.*, for which there are many printed sources, but which seems not to have been widely collected from traditional singers.

[Turn of the Tide] "Mac Can 'Ave Me Seaboots", 113-11, 12, W; another of John Masfield's poems (see "Sea Fever", above), published in *Salt Water Poems and Ballads*, Macmillan, New York, 1916; pp. 30-32. The personal names are adapted to those of characters in the series, "the Lord" is changed to "Fate" and the entire poem is cast in Willie's stage Cockney, but otherwise this poem remains as Masfield's original. Unlike any other poem or song in the scripts of the *Irene B. Mellon*, this poem is written out in full, probably in order to get the Cockneyisms all straight for the performer, Frank O'Toole.

[Twas the] "Night Before Christmas", 104-12, W; *FB*: 321 (1).

"Twenty One Years On The Meigle", 2-8verso, -; MUNFLA 72-239/pp.30-31 (Glovertown, July 1972), G. Brooking; 73-89/p. 66 (Port de Grave, Winter 1972), A. Dawe; 78-368/PD325 (clipping from undated edition of the *St. John's Public Bureau*, ca 1932-34, printed "by special request"). This song is a "serious parody" of the popular country song "Twenty One Years" and was

¹This term is that of Peter Narváez. See his "The Folk Parodist," *Canadian Folk Music Journal*, 5 (1977), 107 - 114; the concept is further developed in his unpublished PhD dissertation, "The Protest Songs of a Labor Union" (U of Indiana, 1986).

- recast to fit the circumstances of a fisherman, who engaging in a riot in the Spaniard's Bay area in the early to mid-1930s is sentenced to a long term in jail. So many people were sentenced for rioting in the 1932-34 that the Newfoundland Government commissioned one of their Railway ("Coastal") boats, the *Meigle*, as a prison boat, thus the song. The original song ("Twenty One Years") has remained a popular song in Newfoundland, being published in the *Newfoundlander* 11:9 (Feb. 1949) 20-21, and being recorded at least twice: Harry Hibbs, *Somewhere At Sea* Caribou CCLP7004, ca 1971; and, the Newfoundland Showband, *Visit To Newfoundland* Marathon ALS350, ca 1970. Brunings notes a song by the title "Answer to Twenty One Years", *FB*: 11.
- "Two Little Orphans", 73-5, R; *FB*: 323 (1); *MUNFLA* 73-114/FSC31-32 (St. John's, Jan. 1973), M. Chaalk; *Newfoundlander* 9:9 (Feb. 1947) 12 (requested); *Newfoundlander* 9:10 (Mar. 1947) 9, 11. This song was a popular Irish song in Newfoundland as sung by Mickey and Maude Carton and it was often played in the 1950s on the *Big Six Programme*, later known as *The Irish Newfoundland Show*, on VOCM. It was also recorded, with an adapted tune, by Doc Williams and the Border Riders in the 1950s and this version, too, was popular in Newfoundland. [PF/GQ]
- "In The Valley of the Moon", 18-15, R; 31-3, R; 109-3, F/R+; published 1933 by Joe Morris Music, Co., (*MLO*, p. 207).
- "We Must All Stick Together", 170-2, all hahds; in fact this title is crossed off in the script and "The Stone Outside Dan Murphy's Door" is substituted. It probably seemed like an appropriate song to Withers as this episode was the last one of the series.
- "When I Go [Grow] Too Old To Dream", 49-14, E/P/Ed Brendon and Bob Pine; published 1934, 1935 by MGM, Inc, an Oscar-Hammerstein-Sigmund Romberg song; it was here sung as a male quartet; *MUNFLA* 73-93/C1491, C1493 (Bell Island, Nov. 1972), B. Reid.)
- "When It's Springtime In The Rockies", 1-7, F; *FB*: 340 (2); published 1929 by Villa Moret, Inc. (*MLO*, p. 205); recorded and made popular by the "crooner" Rudy Vallee who sang it on his network radio series, *The Fleischmann's Hour* in the early 1930s (AP wire story, "Rudy Vallee Dead at 84," *Evening Telegram*, 4 July 1986, 1).

•When The Work's All Done This Fall* (Laws B3), 47-43, R; FB:341 (8); Leach 1965, p. 246 (*The Cowboy*); *Newfoundlander* 12:9 (Feb. 1950) 5; this song is well-known throughout North America and was recorded in the 1950s by the Virginia country singer Mac Wiseman. It seems likely that it was made popular in Newfoundland in the early 1930s by a similar country recording, possibly by Wilf Carter. [PF/GQ] The popularity of the song in that decade is underlined by its inclusion in the programme of a Winterton, Trinity Bay concert sponsored by the Society of United Fishermen on 8 February 1937 when two boys sang it as *When The Works All Down This Fall* (*News From the Districts* *Observer's Weekly* 7:10 [9 March 1937], p. 14).

•Will Ye No Come Back Again*, 132-8, R; FB: 347 (10); *Newfoundlander* 7:3 (Aug. 1944) 21-22; this song is emblematic of Scottish ethnicity in the same way that several songs in this list are emblematic of Irish ethnicity (see for example, *Did Your Mother Come From Ireland?*). The date of the airing of this song, 23 January 1943 is very close to *Burns Night*, the traditional celebration of those of Scottish ancestry and a night which has been celebrated in St. John's for many years.

[The Wreck of the *Julie Plante*] •The Win' She Blow Lak Hurricane, An' Then She Blow Some More*, 31-11; Brueon; FB: 352 (1), and as *On the Lac St. Pierre*, FB: 235 (1); this is another of the poems of W.H.Drummond set in the original in the French-Canadian accented English of a Canadian lake-boater. Here we have it recited by a French-Canadian seaman, Captain Brueon. The full title of the original is *The Wreck of the *Julie Plante* -- A Legend of Lac St. Pierre*, *The Poetical Works of William Henry Drummond*, Putnam, New York, 1912, pp. 7-8.

•Ze Place She Was Born Me Was Down By Ze River*, 77-25, Capt. Rosou; another recitation cast in French-Canadian accented English, but I am unable to find it in the collections of W.H.Drummond.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This thesis is a set of case studies in the area of folklore and popular culture. The line between these two phenomena is thin. Narváez's suggestion that there exists a continuum between them is a starting point for an understanding of their articulation.¹ It has been shown in this thesis that elements of each can turn up as embedded aspects of any given item. In the analysis of the folklore complex of the *Irene B. Mellon* it was shown that items of folkloric provenance may appear in popular culture contexts and vice versa. To make matters more complex, some of these items ultimately derived from producers of elite art. This embedding can be a potent factor in cultural change.

An implication of this study of the *Irene B. Mellon* programme series is an insight into the interplay of folklore, oral history and the production of memory. A much shorter version of Chapter Four was written as a term paper for a graduate course in folksong. When the paper was finished I sent a copy to one of the main informants and he read and reread its contents. He asked me to come by again, which I did, and he went over the mistakes I had made, filling in some areas which I knew nothing about when I wrote the paper. He delighted in

¹ Introduction, *Media Sense*, Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1986.

reading aloud from my text, allowing a new experience of fond memories. In successive visits he pulled out my paper as if it were the authoritative source of information about the radio series.

Some time later I had access to the scripts of that series and I learned a great deal of information that the human memories of this and several other informants had not passed on to me. When I went to this informant with questions based on the new information I was told that I was being lied to by another informant: the things I was suggesting simply did not happen. After all, I was told, here was the proof: my term paper! It appeared that my own text had consolidated and frozen his memories of the programme to the exclusion of his own freshly produced memories.

A question one must ask is, "Why will a person tell the same story over, and over again about an event?" This is the experience of many fieldworkers in folklore and oral history: in trying to jog memories of other aspects of an event it is found that they cannot be brought forward. Another more general way of putting this question is "Why do so many people tell the same stories about an event?" Clearly we have oral historical cores to the repeated stories, but we also have recurrent folk historical biases or points of view which are repeated in different texts from people who have shared experiences. There is a trivial answer to the question: certain things happened and the different people's stories reflect the mere fact that they all experienced them. Likewise trivially, we might say that the fact of similarity between narratives is a testimony to their memories and

a vindication of the tools of oral history. But more important is the question of the production of memories. In my own fieldwork, interference was made by my text, changing, freezing and consolidating memories while forestalling and denying others. Just as my small contribution to the written information on the *Mellon* froze a part of the memories of one informant, changing his oral historical response, so too, we might expect that folkloric responses (the narratives of certain individual tellers, told for humorous, dramatic, historical, or whatever reasons) may have short-circuited the oral-historical response. One expects that just as frequently popular cultural responses may freeze folk responses.

My own paper was an attempt at a scholarly response to the *Irene B. Mellon* and as such an elite one. Interference can come from any "level" of culture if the medium of interference is, like my typed paper, rereadable and therefore programmable. This is quite unlike the effect that radio and other unprogrammable media might have on traditions. Radio's effect is similar to those of folk performances. Radio performance is ephemeral; once heard it is gone. Although listeners might request repeat performances, the aural productions never have the solidity of print, manuscript or sound recordings. For this reason the text-freezing capability of radio is quite low.

Oral history *per se* is not folk history. The one is a tool of the historian (or other scholar) and a form of documentation, the other a product of the minds of human beings sharing experiences and shaping experiences. The two interfere with and modify each other. Dan Ben-Amos suggests that there are several

semantic "strands" which twist together into the thread which folklorists have called "tradition."² For many, "tradition" has implied a continuity over time or among succeeding generations. This view excludes the clearly folkloric response to an event by an individual, whose responses die with him. There is no doubt that the vast majority of folkloric responses to events die with the individuals who carried them. Sandra Dolby-Stahl has suggested a bipartite scheme which would serve to distinguish between "traditional" lore and personal lore. She calls these respectively communal and private folklore.³ Personal lore can become communal lore, but only when it succeeds in being passed on, either through the social success of its original carrier, or through some inherent aspect (humour, drama, rousing tune and so on) which called attention to it. Folk history is a clear example of this process: shared experiences produce folk history when the memories are reshared. If that folk sense of what happened is never mentioned again, then it is lost.

As Dorson found with the industrial folklore of Indiana millworkers, much of the collected lore related to radio and radio workers is not "of long antiquity," which is to say not the kinds of materials folklorists have in the past been accustomed to working with.⁴ Much of it is in fact what Dolby-Stahl would

² Dan Ben-Amos, "The Seven Strands of 'Tradition,'" *Journal of Folklore Research*, 21: 2-3 (1984), 97 - 131.

³ Sandra K. Dolby-Stahl, "A Literary Folkloristic Methodology for the Study of Meaning in Personal Narrative," *Journal of Folklore Research*, 22:1 (1985), 45 - 69.

⁴ Richard M. Dorson, *Land of the Millrats* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1981), p. 108.

call personal lore, non-"traditional" lore. Nevertheless, its folkloric use and its folkloric context make clear the role of this lore.

The study of the narratives of a retired radio announcer (Chapter Two) pointed out the purposive manner in which the narratives are used. The purpose focussed on in the chapter is the shaping of the teller's image. Roger Abrahams has noted the rhetorical use of folklore.⁵ This is similar to the characterisation of gossip by Paine who suggests that gossip is used purposively by persons, with little regard to the social functioning.⁶ An individual's entire expressive repertoire is produced and used in this fashion: we all hear many more jokes, for example, than we choose to retell. We pick and choose from the available stock of cultural items reaching us by whatever means, as well as shape new folklore according to our needs.

Chapter Three of this thesis, dealing with message programmes, investigated the uses put to a radio programme by its audience which accepted a new medium of expression and put it to use with wide enthusiasm. The programme led to new forms of expression, spawning a "chapter" in the folk history of Newfoundland as well as a sub-genre of humorous legend. The message programme type had such wide and open access, as well as audience, that it can be seen as a "folk programme," a radio programme which responded so

⁵ "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 86 (1968), 143 - 158.

⁶ "What is Gossip about? An Alternative Hypothesis," *Man* 2 (1967), 278 - 285.

completely to needs of its listeners that they were able to put it to their own uses, regardless of the stated and felt needs of the producers and sponsors. As it happened, the most successful of these shows was probably such a success because of the confluence of needs between audience and sponsor.

Chapters Four and Five investigated the oral history and folkloric role of one long-standing radio programme of the nineteen-thirties and -forties, the *Irene B. Mellon*. More than any other variety programme of the era, it is remembered today as representative of Newfoundland folk culture. It is remembered by listeners and broadcasters alike because of its use of folk speech, folk music and other cultural forms. The participants in the programme came from traditional backgrounds and were able to bring to the radio show many aspects of folk sensibility and taste. Although the medium was a popular one, the performances remained folkloric. For the performers themselves the programme meant moving from a more local, private tradition of performance, to a more regional, public one. The materials presented in the radio performances were representative of many traditional genres: songs and traditional monologues were examined in some detail.

Together, these chapters display some of the rewards to be gleaned from a folkloristic analysis of the rich and varied documentation of popular radio. In particular, the impact of traditional, oral culture on regional radio has been examined in all three studies. It is hoped that this thesis may provide a frame of reference for future researchers in the area.

Appendix A

Bibliographical Note on the Gerald S. Doyle Bulletin

The *Bulletin* is without a doubt the most talked, and written, about radio or television programme in Newfoundland's history. There are over a dozen and a half articles in the popular press about the *Doyle Bulletin*. See for example; James Thoms, "The Doyle News: A Newfoundland Institution," in J.R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, vol. 4, Newfoundland Book Publishers, Ltd., St. John's, 1967, pp. 347-350; Jean King, "The Doyle News," *Atlantic Advocate* 56 (June 1966), 80 - 82, reprinted in B-Morgan, H. Porter and G. Rubia, eds., *From This Place: A Selection of Writing by Women of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Jespersen, St. John's, 1977, pp. 38 - 43; Bill Callahan's article on the *Bulletin*, *Decks Awash* 10:1 (February 1981), 7-8; Cathy Doyle's unpublished paper, "The Doyle Bulletin", History Department, M.U.N., 1973, which is on deposit at CNS, MUN; "Public Service Good Advertising," *Evening Telegram*, 16 July 1949; "The Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin (1932 - 1965)," *Decks Awash* 10:1 (February 1981), 20-21; and, Genevieve Lehr, "Doyle News" in J. R. Smallwood, et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador (ENL)*, I, Newfoundland Book Publishers, St. John's, 1981, p. 641. The Gerald S. Doyle Company published, in the form of an ad, their own view of the

programme in J. R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, vol. 6. Newfoundland Book Publishers, St. John's, 1975, p. [646]. The CBC released its view of the programme in a special supplement to the *Evening Telegram*, entitled "The Golden Age of CBN, St. John's 640, 1932-1982," 29 October 1982, p. 5A. Biographical information on Doyle is available in Glenn Deir, "We'll Rant and We'll Roar: The Gerald S. Doyle Songbooks," *The Liveyere* 1: 3-4 (Winter/Spring 1982), 38-40; Genevieve Lehr, "Gerald S. Doyle" *ENL*, I, 641; "Mr. Doyle Honoured by King," *Newfoundland Quarterly* (Summer 1944), 32; and his biographical entry in the "Dictionary of Newfoundland Biography" in J.R. Smallwood, ed., *The Book of Newfoundland*, vol. V, 1975. See Peter Narváez's "Joseph R. Smallwood, The Barrelman: Broadcaster and Folklorist," *Canadian Folklore Canadien* 5: 1-2 (1983), 62 for the commercial context of Doyle's involvement in radio. A similar approach is taken by Paul Mercer and Mack Swackhammer, "The Singing of Old Newfoundland Ballads and a Cool Glass of Beer Go Hand in Hand: Folklore and 'Tradition' in Newfoundland Advertising," *Culture and Tradition*, 3 (1978), 36-46. Printed references to listeners tuning into the *Bulletin* may be found in Aubrey Tizzard's *On Sloping Ground*, MUN Folklore Community Study No. 2, Memorial University, St. John's, 1979, pp. 337-339; reprinted Breakwater Books, St. John's, 1984; and, Benjamin Powell, *Labrador By Choice*, Testimony, Toronto, 1979, p. 107. A fictionalised picture of outport Newfoundlanders listening to the *Doyle News* is to be found in Ron Pollett's stories, "Rum in the Pudding" and "Uncle Ben's Adventure," *The*

Ocean At My Door, Guardian Press, St. John's, 1956, pp. 163-178 and 294-296, respectively. Herbert Lench Pottle's *Fun On The Rock: Toward a Theory of Newfoundland Humour*, Breakwater Books, St. John's, 1983, p. 22, gives three *Doyle News* stories without giving the name of the programme.

There are many references to the *Doyle Bulletin* in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). Some of these are listed here:

Tape C5645/82-085
 FSC 68-23/85-87
 FSC 64-4/021
 ms 83-056, pp.
 ms 68-15, p. 20
 ms 68-23, pp.
 ms 69-6, p. 049
 ms 71-44, p. 104
 ms 73-174, pp. 23-24
 ms 73-188, p. 20
 tape C3349/78-008
 ms 80-020, p. 14
 ms 81-425, p. 10

The William F. Galgay Papers, housed at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland, have several important references to the *Doyle Bulletin*. See in particular Folders 3, 45, 62, 105, 112 and 128.

Appendix B

Sound recordings deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore & Language Archive (MUNFLA) as Research for this Thesis

MUNFLA 83-236

F6327c	C6248	Aubrey MacDonald 30 July 1983
F6985c	C6947	Oscar Hierlihy 11 October 1983
F6986c	C6948	Aubrey MacDonald 27 October 1983
F6987c	C6949	Oscar Hierlihy 29 October 1983 (i)
F6988c	C6950	Oscar Hierlihy 29 October 1983 (ii)
F6989c	C6951	Oscar Hierlihy 29 October 1983 (iii) /
F6970c	C6952	Oscar Hierlihy 13 November 1983 (i)
F6971c	C6953	Oscar Hierlihy 13 November 1983 (ii)
F6972c	C6954	Melvin Rowe 14 November 1983 (i)
F6973c	C6955	Melvin Rowe 14 November 1983 (ii)
F6974c	C6956	Ted Withers 17 November 1983
F6975c	C6957	Pat DeBourke 6 December 1983

MUNFLA 85-040

F7430c	C7410	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 10/9/83, 8/10/83
F7431c	C7411	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 15/10/83, 22/10/83
F7432c	C7412	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 29/10/83, 12/11/83 (i)
F7433c	C7413	A: <i>Margot Davies, Child of Light</i> , 11/11/83
		B: <i>Nice and Easy</i> , 12/11/83 (ii)
F7434c	C7414	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 19/11/83, 3/12/83
F7435c	C7415	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 10/12/83, 24/12/83
F7436c	C7416	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 31/12/83

F7437c	C7417	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 11/2/84, 3/3/84
F7338c	C7418	<i>Nice and Easy</i> , 10/3/84, 17/3/84
F7439c	C7419	Programmes aired in place of <i>Nice and Easy</i> 24/3/84, 7/4/84
F7440c	C7420	<i>CBN Morning Show</i> , 27/9/84
F7441c	C7421	Ted Withers' <i>Mack's Memories</i> , 14/5/84 - 1/6/84
F7442c	C7422	A: Harry Brown's obituary for Aubrey MacDonald, aired on CBC <i>Morningside</i> , 28/9/84 B: <i>Aubrey Mac: My Way</i> , CBN special, 29/9/84
F7443c	C7423	<i>Regional Roundup</i> , 6/1/85 (Ted Withers talking about his father and the <i>Irene B. Mellon</i>)
F7444c	C7424	A: <i>CBN Morning Show</i> , 12/12/84: local CBC cuts B: <i>CBC Sunday Morning</i> , 17/12/84: national CBC cuts
F7445c	C7425	Pat DeBourke, 25/2/84
F7446c	C7426	Evann Whiteway, 25/2/84
F7447c	C7427	Bill Hollett, 15/8/84
F7448c	C7428	Bill Hollett, 27/9/84
F7449c	C7429	Robert S. Furlong, 4/10/84
F7450c	C7430	Joseph V. Butler, 18 October 1984
F7451c	C7431	A: Notes re meeting with Ted and Frankie Coleman, 18/11/84 B: Notes re meeting with Bob and Brenda MacDonald, 24/11/84
F7545c	C7516	Ern MacDonald, 2/2/85 (i)
F7546c	C7517	Ern MacDonald, 2/2/85 (ii)
F7891	C7805	Pat DeBourke, 26/5/85
F7892c	C7806	Pat DeBourke, 20/4/85
F7893c	C7807	Michael Harrington, 13/6/85
F7894c	C7808	Michael Harrington, 9/7/85
F7895c	C7809	Michael Harrington on CBN <i>Radio Noon</i> , August 1983, "Looking Back"

F8400c	C8439	Pat DeBourke, 11/4/86
F8401c	C8440	Len Coleman, 26/3/86

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- (See also Appendix B; for a list of recordings collected as part of the research for this thesis, and deposited in MUNFLA.)

Commercial Recordings Cited

Note: The following are twelve-inch, 33 1/3 r.p.m. discs unless otherwise noted.

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